

The Pennycomequicks



THE
PENNYCOMEQUICKS

A Novel

BY

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'MEHALAH,' 'COURT ROYAL,' 'JOHN HERRING,' 'THE GAVEROCKS,' ETC.

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THE PENNYCOMEQUICKS.



CHAPTER XVII.

MISFORTUNES NEVER COME SINGLY.

NEXT morning Salome was agreeably surprised to find her mother better, brighter, and without the expression of mingled alarm and pain that her face had worn for the last two days. She refrained from telling her about the mysterious nocturnal visitor, because it was her invariable practice to spare the old lady everything that might cause her anxiety and provoke a relapse. It could do no good to unnecessarily alarm her, and Salome knew how to refrain from speaking unnecessarily.

Before paying her mother her morning visit, Salome made an attempt to get at the bottom of the matter that puzzled her and rendered her uneasy. It was

the duty of the housemaid to lock the doors at night. Salome sent for her, and inquired about that which gave admission to the garden. The girl protested that she had fastened up as usual, and had not neglected any one of the doors.

Notwithstanding this assurance, Salome remained unshaken in her conviction that the open doorway was due to the neglect of the servant. She knew that in the class of domestics, truth is esteemed too precious to be wasted by telling it, and that the asseveration of a maid charged with misdemeanour is to be read like morning dreams. She did not pursue the matter with the young woman, so as not to involve her in fresh falsehoods ; she, herself, remained of the same opinion.

On her way across the hall to her mother's room, Salome noticed that the garden-door was not only locked, but that the key had been withdrawn from it. This Philip had done last night, and he had not replaced it. It now occurred to her that she had omitted taking a step which might, and probably would, have led to the detection of the trespasser. The door led into the garden, but egress from the

garden could only be had through the door in the wall of the lower or vegetable garden, rarely used, generally locked, through which manure was brought, and the man occasionally employed in the garden passed when there employed. As this gate would certainly be locked, the man who had gone out of the house into the garden could only have escaped thence with difficulty. If he had been at once pursued, he might have been captured before he could scale the wall. This had not occurred to her or to Philip at the time.

‘Salome, my dear,’ said Mrs. Cusworth, after her daughter had kissed her and congratulated her on her improvement, ‘I am thankful to say that I am better. A load that has troubled and oppressed me for some days has been lifted off my heart.’

‘I am glad, mamma,’ said the girl, ‘that at last you are reconciled to the change. It was inevitable. I dare say you will feel better when we are settled at Redstone.’

‘My dear,’ answered Mrs. Cusworth, ‘I must abandon the idea of going there.’

‘Where? To Redstone?’

‘Yes. The house is beyond my means. I cannot possibly afford it.’

‘But—mamma.’ Salome was startled. ‘I have already secured the lodgings.’

‘Only for a quarter, and it would be better to sacrifice a quarter’s rent than turn out again in three months. I could not endure the shift again, so quickly following this dreadful change.’

‘But—mamma!’ Salome was greatly taken aback. ‘This is springing a surprise on me. We have no other house into which we can go.’

‘A cottage, quite a cottage, such as the artisans occupy, must content us. We shall have to cut our coat according to our cloth.’

‘Mamma! You allowed me to engage Redstone.’

‘I did not then know how we were circumstanced. To make both ends meet we shall have to pinch.’

‘But why pinch? You told me before that we had enough on which to live quietly but comfortably.’

‘I was mistaken. I have had a great and unexpected loss.’

‘Loss, mamma! What loss?’

‘I mean—well,’ the old lady stammered, ‘I mean a

sore disappointment. I am not so well off as I had supposed. I had miscalculated my resources.'

'Have you only just discovered what your means really are?'

'You must not excite her,' said Janet reproachfully.

'I do not wish to do so,' explained Salome. 'But I am so surprised, so puzzled—and this is such an upset of our plans at the last moment, after I had engaged the lodgings—I do not know what to think about it.' She paused, considered, and said with a flush in her face: 'Mamma, you surely had not reckoned on poor uncle's will?'

Mrs. Cusworth hesitated, then said: 'Of course, it is a severe blow to me that no provision had been made for you and me. We might fairly have reckoned on receiving something after what was done for Janet, and you were his favourite.'

'Oh, mamma, you did not count on this?'

'Remember that you are left absolutely destitute. What little I have saved will hardly support us both. Janet can do nothing for us just now.'

'Because of the Prussians,' said Mrs. Baynes. 'Wait a bit; as soon as we have swept them from the

face of fair France, I shall make you both come to me at Elbœuf.'

'Mamma,' said Salome, 'I am still puzzled. You knew very well that uncle's will was worthless when you let me make arrangements for Redstone, and now that I have settled everything you knock over my plans. If you had told me——'

'I could not tell you. I did not know,' said the widow. 'That is to say, I had misreckoned my means.'

'Then there is no help for it. I must try to get out of the agreement for Redstone, if I can. I am afraid the agent will not let me off. We shall have to pay double rent, and there is little chance of underletting Redstone at this time of the year.'

'Better pay double than have to make a double removal ; it will be less expense in the end.'

'Perhaps so,' answered Salome ; then she left her mother's room that she might go upstairs and think over this extraordinary change of plans. She was painfully aware that she had been treated without due consideration, subjected unnecessarily to much trouble and annoyance.

In the hall she saw Mr. Philip Pennycomequick. He beckoned to her to follow him to the garden-door, and she obeyed. He unlocked the door.

‘I took away the key last night,’ he said, ‘and now you see my reason.’

He pointed to the turf.

A slight fall of snow, that comminuted snow that is like meal, had taken place at sundown, and it had covered the earth with a fine film of white, fine as dust. No further fall had taken place during the night.

A track of human feet was impressed on the white surface from the door to the steps that gave access to the vegetable garden.

Without exchanging a word, both followed the track, walking wide of it, one on each side. A foot-print marked each step, and the track led, less distinctly, down the lower garden to the door in the wall at the bottom, through which it doubtless passed, as there were no signs of a scramble. The door was locked.

‘Have you the key?’ asked Philip.

‘I have not. There is one on Mr. Pennycomequick’s bunch, and my mother has a second.’

‘It matters not,’ said Philip. ‘Outside is a path along which the mill people have gone this morning to their work, and have trampled out all the traces of our mysterious visitor. The prints are those of unshod feet. The shape of the impression tells me that.’

They returned to the house.

‘This unpleasant incident convinces me of one thing,’ said Philip. ‘It will not do for me to live in this place alone. I can explain this mysterious affair in one or other way. Either one of the servants having a brother, cousin, or lover, whom she wished to favour with the pick of my uncle’s clothes, that she knew were laid out for distribution, allowed him to come and choose for himself——’

‘Or else——’

‘Or else the gardener left the little door in the wall ajar. Some passing tramp, seeing it open, ventured in, and finding nothing worth taking in the garden, pursued his explorations to the house, where he was fortunate enough to find another door open, through which he effected his entrance and helped himself to what he first laid hands on. He would have taken more had he not been disturbed by you.’

‘He was not disturbed by me.’

‘He may have seen you pass down the stairs, and so have taken the alarm and decamped. My second explanation is the least probable, for it demands a double simultaneous neglect of fastening doors by two independent persons, the housemaid and the gardener.’

‘The gardener has not been working for some weeks.’

‘Then how this has occurred concerns me less than the prevention of a recurrence,’ said Philip. ‘I must have a responsible person in the house. May I see your mother?’

As he asked, he entered the hall, and Janet at the same moment came out of her mother’s sitting-room with a beaming face. She slightly bowed to Philip, and said eagerly to her sister, ‘Salome, the postman is coming down the road. I am sure he brings me good news. I am going to the door to meet him.’

Salome admitted Philip into the sitting-room. She would have withdrawn, but he requested her to stay.

‘What I have to say to Mrs. Cusworth,’ he said shortly, ‘concerns you as well as your mother.’

He took a chair at the widow's request, and then, in his matter-of-fact business fashion, plunged at once into the subject of his visit.

‘I dare say that you have wondered, madam, that neither Mrs. Sidebottom nor I have made any call on you lately with a proposal. The fact is that only yesterday did my aunt and I arrive at a definite and permanent settlement. You are aware that she has acted as administratrix of my uncle's property. We have, after some difference, come to an arrangement, and by that arrangement I take the factory under my management—that, however, is not a matter of interest to you. What does concern you is the agreement we have struck about the house, which is become practically mine. I shall live in it henceforth and conduct the business so successfully carried on by my uncle, and I hope and trust without allowing it to decline. You are well aware that Mrs. Sidebottom gave you formal notice to quit ; this was a formality, because at the time nothing was settled relative to the firm and the house. Please not to consider for a moment that there was a slight intended. As far as I am concerned, nothing could have been more foreign to my wishes.

Do not allow that notice to affect your arrangements.'

'We accepted the notice, and have made our plans to leave,' said Salome quietly.

'In the first uncertainty as to what would be done,' said Philip, 'Mrs. Sidebottom came to you, Mrs. Cusworth, and I fear spoke with haste and impetuosity. She was excited, and at the time in a state of irritation with me, who had withstood her wishes. Since then an arrangement has been concluded between us which leaves me the house. This house henceforth belongs to me, and not to my aunt, who ceases to have authority within its walls. I am going to live here. But, madam, as you may well believe, I am incapable of managing domestic affairs. I have been unused to have such duties devolve on me. I shall be engaged in mastering new responsibilities which will occupy my whole attention, and it is imperative that I should be spared the distraction of housekeeping. The event of last night—the appearance of a man invading this house——'

Mrs. Cusworth turned deadly pale, and a look of fear came into her eyes. Salome hastily turned to

Philip, and her appealing glance told him he must not touch on a subject that would alarm and agitate her mother.

‘I mean,’ said Philip hastily, ‘that a man, inexperienced like myself, entering a large house in which there are domestics, of whose freaks and vagaries he knows nothing, and desires to know less, is like a colonist in Papua, of the natives of which nothing certain has been revealed. They may be cannibals; they may, on the other hand, be inoffensive. Of landladies in lodging-houses I have had a long and bitter experience. I have run the gamut of them, from the reduced gentlewoman to the wife of an artisan, and I believe it is one of those professions which, like vivisection, dries up the springs of moral worth. It will be essential to my happiness, I may say to my success in the business, to have a responsible person to manage the house for me. You, madam, will relieve me from grave embarrassments if you will consent to remain here on the same terms as heretofore. It will indeed be conferring on me a lasting favour, which I know I am not justified in asking.’

‘It is very good of you to suggest this,’ began the widow.

‘On the contrary,’ interrupted Philip, ‘it is selfish of me to propose it—to wish to retain you in a place where you must be surrounded by sorrowful reminiscences, and tie you to work when you ought to be free from every care.’

‘I thank you,’ said Mrs. Cusworth. ‘It so happens that I am distressed by pecuniary losses, and I am therefore glad to accept your offer.’

‘I am sorry, madam, that you have met with losses. But I do not wish to force you to accept obligations for which you do not feel yourself equal without understanding exactly how matters stand. Mrs. Sidebottom and I have consulted together about the probable wishes of my deceased uncle, and we unite in thinking that he never intended to leave Miss Cusworth unprovided for. The will he had drawn out perhaps erred on the side of excessive liberality to her and disregard of the claims of his own relations. That was cancelled—how, we cannot say. Suffice it to say, it was cancelled, but without cancelling the obligation to do something for Miss Cusworth. We are quite sure that Mr. Pennycomequick intended to provide for her, and Mrs. Sidebottom and I agree in proposing for her

acceptance such a sum as was invested by my late uncle for the benefit of Mrs. Baynes on her marriage a twelve month ago.'

He was the lawyer—formal, cold, stiff—as he spoke, measuring his sentences and weighing his words. Even when he endeavoured to be courteous, as when inviting the widow to stay on in his house, he spoke without ease of manner, graciousness, and softness of tone.

'Of course,' said Mrs. Cusworth, 'it has been a great disappointment to us that we received nothing from Mr. Pennycomequick——'

'Mother!' interrupted Salome, quivering, flushing to the roots of her hair, then turning white. Mrs. Cusworth was one of those ordinary women who think it becomes them not to receive a favour as a favour, but as a due. Salome at once felt the grace and kindness of the arrangement proposed for her advantage by Philip, and had little hesitation in attributing it to him, and freeing Mrs. Sidebottom from the initiative, at least, in it. But her mother supposed it due to her dignity to receive it as a concession to a legitimate claim.

Salome did not look in Philip's face. Afraid that her mother might say something further that was unsuited to the situation, she interposed :

‘Mr. Pennycomequick,’ she said, in a low, gentle voice, ‘you said just now that you had no claim on our services. You have created such a claim. Your proposal is so generous, so kindly intentioned, and so far transcending what we had any right to ask or to expect, that you lay us under an obligation which it will be a pleasure for us to discharge. My dear mother is not herself able to do much with her hands, but she is like a general in a battlefield—on a commanding eminence she issues her directions, and I am her orderly who fly about carrying her commands. We accept with gratitude and pleasure your offer to continue in this house, at least for a while. For that other offer that concerns me alone, will you allow me time to consider it?’

At that moment, before Philip could reply, the door was burst open, and Janet rushed in, with a face of despair, holding an open letter before her.

‘Mamma! Oh, mamma! The Prussians have killed him. Albert—has been shot!’

CHAPTER XVIII.

JOHN DALE.

IN the cabin of the *Conquering Queen*, Mr. Pennycomequick had much time for thought before he was sufficiently recovered to leave his berth. He fell to wondering what Salome and her mother, Mrs. Sidebottom and his nephew, had thought of his disappearance.

‘Can you get me a back newspaper, or some account of the flood?’ he asked of Ann Dewis. ‘I am interested to hear what happened, and whether I am among those accounted to have fallen victims.’

After several trials, Mrs. Dewis procured what was required in pamphlet form—a reprint from one of the West Riding papers of its narrative of the inundation, of the appearance of the country after it had subsided, from its special correspondent, and full lists of the lost

and drowned. Mr. Pennycomequick read this account by the light that descended from the hatchway ; read about the havoc effected in Keld-dale, the walls thrown down, the cottages inundated, the roads and the embankments torn up, and then among the names of those lost he read his own, with the surprising information that the body had been recovered, and though frightfully mutilated, had been identified.

This was news indeed. That he was esteemed dead did not surprise Mr. Pennycomequick when he learned how long he had been ill, but that some other body should have been mistaken for his was indeed inexplicable.

‘ By this time,’ said he to himself, ‘ Salome will have proved my will and Louisa will have exhausted her vituperation of my memory.’

It took him two days to digest what he had learned. As he recovered, his mind recurred to those thoughts which had engaged him on the night of the flood, as he walked on the towpath by the canal.

If he were to return to Mergatroyd when supposed to be dead, he was confident that Salome and her mother would receive him with unfeigned delight, and

without reluctance surrender to him what they had received through his bequest. But he was by no means sure of himself, that in the joy of his return he would be able to control his feelings so as not to show to Salome what their real nature was.

He recalled his prayer to Heaven, that he might have the way pointed out to him which he should go, and startlingly, in a manner unexpected, in a direction not anticipated, the hand of Providence had flashed out of the sky and had pointed out his course. It had snapped his tie to Mergatroyd—at all events temporarily ; had separated him from Salome, and set him where he had leisure and isolation in which to determine his conduct. Jeremiah was a man of religious mind, and this consideration profoundly affected him. He had been carried from his home, and his name blotted out of the book of the living.

What would be the probable consequences were he to return to Mergatroyd as soon as he was recovered ? The very desire he felt to be back, to see Salome again, was so strong within him that it constituted evidence to his mind that if he were at home, in the exuberant joy of meeting her again he would let drop those

words which his judgment told him ought not to be spoken. Other thoughts besides these exercised his mind.

He turned to the past, to his dead brother Nicholas, and his conscience reproached him for having maintained the feud so persistently and so remorselessly. Nicholas had suffered for what he had done, and by suffering had expiated his fault. He, Jeremiah, had, moreover, visited on the guiltless son the resentment he bore to the father. He endeavoured to pacify his conscience by the reflection that he had made a provision for Philip in his will ; but this reflection did not satisfy him. Philip was the representative of the family, and Jeremiah had no right to exclude him from the firm without a trial of his worth.

Then he turned to another train of ideas connected with his present condition.

Was his health likely to be sufficiently restored to enable him to resume the old routine of work ? Would a resumption of his duties conduce to the re-edification of his health ? Would it not retard, if not prevent, complete recovery ? Would it not be a better course for him to shake himself free from every care—keep his

mind disengaged from business till his impaired constitution had been given time to recover? He knew that rheumatic fever often seriously affected the heart, and he asked himself whether he dare return to the conflict of feeling, the inner struggle, sure to attend a recurrence to the same condition as before. Would it not be the wisest course for him to go abroad for a twelvemonth or more, to some place where his mind might recover its balance, his health be re-established—and he might acquire that perfect mastery over his feelings which he had desired, but which he had lost.

What did he care about the fortune he had amassed—by no means a large one, but respectable? He was a man of simple habits and of no ambition. He was interested in his business, proud of the good name the firm had ever borne. He would be sorry to think that Pennycomequick should cease to be known in Yorkshire as the title of an old-established reliable business associated with figured linen damasks. But was his presence in the factory essential to its continuance?

He looked at Ann Dewis squatted by the fire

smoking. For seventeen years she had kept Earle Schofield's pipe going, which he had put into her mouth, and she had been faithful to a simple request. He had put his mill into Salome's hands, and had said, 'Keep it going.' Was she less likely to fulfil his wish than had been Ann Dewis to the desire of Earle Schofield?

He was not concerned as to his means of subsistence should he determine to remain as one dead. He had an old friend, one John Dale, at Bridlington, the only man to whom he was not reserved and suspicious—the only man of whom he took counsel when in doubt and difficulty.

John Dale had a robust common-sense, and to him Jeremiah resolved to apply. When John Dale first went to Bridlington he had been lent a considerable sum of money by his friend, which had not been repaid, but which, now that Dale had established a good practice as a surgeon, he was ready and willing to repay. John Dale had been constituted trustee on the occasion of Janet's marriage. He had paid visits to Mergatroyd, and Jeremiah had visited Bridlington; but as both were busy men, such visits had been short

and few. Though, however, they saw little of each other, their mutual friendship remained unimpaired.

As soon as Mr. Pennycomequick was sufficiently recovered to leave the barge, he provided himself with a suit of clothes at a slop-shop, and settled into an inn in the town of Hull, whence he wrote to Dale to come to him. He had his purse in his pocket when he was carried away from Mergatroyd, and the purse contained a few sovereigns, sufficient to satisfy his immediate necessities.

' 'Pon my word, never was so astonished in my life !' shouted John Dale, as he burst into the room occupied by his friend, then stood back, looked at him from head to foot, and roared.

Mr. Pennycomequick was strangely altered. He had been accustomed to shave his face, with the exception of a pair of cutlets that reached no lower than the lobe of his ears. Now his face was frouzy with hair : lips, jaws, cheeks, chin, throat, were overgrown, and the hair had got beyond the primary stage of stubbledom. He had been wont to attire himself in black or Oxford mixture of a dark hue, to wear a suit of formal cut, and chiefly to affect a double-breasted frock coat that

gave a specially substantial mercantile look to the man. The suit in which he was now invested was snuff-coloured and cut away in stable fashion.

‘Upon my word, this is a regeneration! Dead as a manufacturer, alive as a man on the turf. Is the moral transformation as radical? What is the meaning of this? I saw your death in the papers. I wrote to Salome about it, a letter of condolence, and had her reply. How came you to life again, you impostor, and in this guise?’

The doctor—he was really a surgeon—but everyone called him Dr. Dale, was a stout, florid man, with his hair cut short as that of a Frenchman, like the fur on the back of a mole. He was fresh, boisterous in manner when out of the sick-room, but when engaged on a patient, laid aside his roughness and noise. His cheeriness, his refusal to take a gloomy view of a case, made him popular, and perhaps went some way towards encouraging nature to make an effort to throw off disease.

Jeremiah told him the story of his escape.

‘And now,’ said Dale, ‘I suppose you are going back. By Jove, I should like to see the faces when

you reappear in the family circle thus dressed and behaired.'

'Before I consider about going back, I want you to overhaul me,' said Jeremiah, 'and please to tell me plainly what you find. I'm not a woman to be frightened at bad news.'

'At once, old man. Off with those togs,' shouted the surgeon.

When the medical examination was over, Dale told Mr. Pennycomequick that his heart was weak, but that there was no organic derangement. He must be careful of himself for some time to come. He must avoid climbing hills, ascending many stairs.

'As, for instance, the several flights of my factory.'

'Yes—you must content yourself with the office.'

'I might as well give up at once the entire management if I may not go to the several departments and see what is going on there.'

'You must economize the pulsations of your heart for awhile. You will find yourself breathless at every ascent. Your heart is at fault, not your lungs. The machine is weak, and you must not make an engine of one-horse power undertake work that requires one of

five. If you could manage to knock off work altogether——'

'For how long?'

'That depends. You are not a boy with superabundant vitality and any amount of recuperative power. After the age of fifty we have to husband our strength ; we get well slowly, not with a leap. A child is down to-day and up to-morrow. An old man who is down to-day is up perhaps that day month. The thing of all others for you would be to go abroad for a bit, to—let us say, the South of France or Sicily, or better still, Cairo, lead a *dolce far niente* life, forget worries, neglect duties, disregard responsibilities, and let Nature unassisted be your doctor and nurse.'

'Now look here, Dale,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, 'your advice jumps with my own opinion. I have been considering whilst convalescent what was the good of my drudging on at Mergatroyd. I have made a fortune—a moderate one, but one that contents me—and have no need to toil through the last years of life, to fag out the final straws of existence.'

'Fag out !' exclaimed Dale, 'you dog, you—why,

you have gone into the Caldron of Pelias, and have come forth rejuvenated.'

'If I remember the story aright,' retorted Jeremiah, 'Pelias never came out of the caldron. I am like Pelias in this, that I have gone into the waters of Lethe.'

'Now, Jeremiah, old boy,' said the surgeon, 'let this be a settled thing, you husband your strength for a twelvemonth at least, and you will then be vigorous as ever. If you insist on going into harness at once, in two years I shall be attending your funeral.'

'Very well,' said Jeremiah, 'if things are in order at Mergatroyd, I will go, but I cannot allow the business to fall into confusion. To tell you the truth, I have reasons which make me wish not to go back there till I am quite restored, but I should like to know what is going on there.'

'That I can perhaps tell you. I have had a letter from Salome. Do you know, my friend, when I have been away from Bridlington, on a holiday, I have been on thorns, thinking that everything must be going out of gear on account of my absence, that my *locum tenens* has let patients slip and mismanaged difficult

cases ; yet when I have returned I have found that I was not missed—all has gone on swimmingly without me. You will find that it has been the same at Mergatroyd.'

'But what says Salome?'

'In the first place that cricket, Janet, is back. She was sent home lest an Uhlan should fall in love with her or she fall in love with an Uhlan, and now her husband is dead. Like a fool he served as a volunteer, uncalled for, as he was an Englishman.'

'Albert Baynes dead! Then you will have some work on your hands as trustee.'

'So I shall. Now about your affairs. It seems that the will you drew up against my advice, without taking legal opinion, was so much waste-paper; Salome says merely that it proved invalid, so Mrs. Sidebottom had to take out letters of administration, and divide your property between her and your nephew Philip.'

'What!—Salome get nothing! I shall go back at once and send those two vultures to the right about.'

'Have patience; they came out better than you might have expected. It has been arranged that

Philip shall live in your house and undertake the management of the factory, and he has asked Mrs. Cusworth to remain on in the old place in the same position as she occupied before.'

'I am glad they have had the grace not to turn her out.'

'That is not all. As it was clearly your wish that Salome should be liberally provided for, your sister and nephew have agreed to fund for her the same amount that was invested for her sister Janet. Now I do not know what your will was, but it seems to me that nothing could have been better, even if you had the disposing of it. Your natural heirs get their rights, and your pet Salome is honourably and even handsomely treated by them.'

Jeremiah said nothing; his chin fell on his breast. He had not thought that Mrs. Sidebottom would do a generous thing. Of Philip he knew nothing; but what he had just heard predisposed him in his favour.

'Now take my advice, Jeremiah,' continued Dr. Dale. 'Let Philip go on where he is. He has thrown up his place in a solicitor's office at Nottingham, and,

as Salome writes, is devoting himself energetically to the work of the mill, and learning all the ramifications of the business. You wanted someone to relieve you, and you have the man—the right man, already in the place.’

‘He may get everything wrong.’

‘I do not believe it. You have an aversion to lawyers, but let me tell you that a lawyer’s office is an excellent school ; there men learn to know human nature, how to deal with men, and get business habits. The fellow must have a good heart, or he would not have come to an arrangement with his aunt to part with a large sum of money for Salome. Besides, Salome is no fool, and she writes of him in high praise for his diligence, his regular habits, and his kindness and consideration for her mother.’

John Dale paused for Jeremiah to say something ; but his friend remained silent, with his head down, thinking.

‘If you go back,’ said the doctor, ‘you will throw everything wrong. You will worry yourself and will take the spirit out of Philip. Trust him. He is on his mettle. If he makes a blunder, that is natural,

and he will suffer for it ; but he will commit none that is fatal ; he is too shrewd for that.'

'Dale,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, 'if I make up my mind not to return to Mergatroyd, I make up my mind at the same time to leave those there in ignorance that I am still alive.'

'As you like. It would not be amiss. Then Philip would work with better energy. If things go wrong I can always drop you a line and recall you, and you can appear as *Deus ex machinâ*, and set all to rights. I have often thought that half the aggravation of leaving this world must be the seeing things going to sixes and sevens without being able to right them, a business we have got together being scattered, a reputation we have built up being pulled down ; to have to see things going contrary to our intentions, and be unable to put out a finger to mend them ; to hear ourselves criticised, and ill-natured, and false stories told of us, and be incapable of saying a word in our own defence. I will tell you a story. At one time when I went to dinner-parties I was the first to go. But on one occasion I stayed, and Mr. and Mrs. Smith left before me. No sooner were their backs turned

than the company fell to criticising the Smiths, their pretensions, the airs they gave themselves, till the Brownes departed, whereupon the conversation became scandalous about the Brownes: then the Jones family departed. Thereupon I learned that the Joneses were living beyond their means, and were on the verge of bankruptcy. So on till the last was gone. After that I have never been the first to leave; I try to be last, so as to leave only my host and hostess behind to discuss and blacken me. Now, Jeremiah, you have gone out quickly and unexpectedly, and if you could steal back to Mergatroyd unperceived, then you will find that the maxim *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* is not being observed. You are fortunate; you can return at will and correct false estimates. That is not given save to the exceptionally privileged.'

'You will go to Mergatroyd for me,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, 'and see with your own eyes how things are?'

'Certainly I will. Do you know, old fellow,' said Dale, with a twinkle in his eye, 'I have sometimes feared for you, feared lest you should make a ghastly fool of yourself, and make that dear little piece of

goods, Salome, your wife. It would not do, old boy ; if you had done it I would have ceased to respect you ; you would have lost the regard and provoked the ridicule of everyone in Mergatroyd. Old boy, it would never have done.'

'No,' said Mr. Pennycomequick, 'it would never have done ; you are right, it would never have done.'

'It would have been a cruelty to her,' pursued Dale, 'for Nature never designed Winter to mate with Spring, to bring a frost on all the sweet blossoms of youth, and in checking the rising sap, perhaps to kill the plant.'

'No,' said Jeremiah, 'it would never have done.'

CHAPTER XIX

BACKING OUT.

‘YOU will dine with us to-night, Philip,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘Now that we have settled our business, it will be quite fascinating to have a bright and cheerful evening together. We will take the crape off our heads and hearts. Lamb shall sing us some of his comic songs, and I will play you any music you like on the piano. You shall listen, and the *motif* of our entertainment shall be “Begone, dull care.” I wish there were anyone invitable in this place, but there is not, and, moreover, though I do not care for the opinion of these barbarians, it is too soon after the funeral to have a dinner-party ; we must mind the proprieties wherever we are.’

Mrs. Sidebottom was in good spirits. She had managed for herself well. The estate of Mr. Penny-

comequick had been divided between herself and Philip, but as the business was already charged with her jointure, he deducted this from the total before dividing. She still retained her hold on the factory, remained as a sleeping partner in the firm, though, as Philip found to his cost before long, she was a sleeping partner given to walking in her sleep. Philip was to be the active member of the firm. It was by no means her wish that the mill should be sold and the business pass away, because it was prosperous. If it had fallen into Lambert's hands it would have been different, for she knew well that her son would have been incompetent to conduct it. She was cheerful now that all was concluded, perfectly satisfied with herself, for the terms she had made with her nephew did not err on the side of generosity.

‘And now,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘I really do intend to get Lamb to insert a hyphen in his name, and spell the final syllable with a capital Q. I have ascertained from a really learned man that our name is most respectful, and, like all good names, is territorial. It is of ancient British origin, and means the Wick or settlement as the head of a Combe, that is a

valley. When you know this you feel that it has an aristocratic flavour, and that is older than trade. I think that when written Penycombe-Quick it will have an air, Philip, an air of such exalted respectability as will entitle us to look on those who were entered on the Roll of Battle Abbey as parvenus. I intend to have Lamb's cards printed thus. I like the American way of combining the paternal name with that acquired at marriage. If I call myself Mrs. Penycombe-Quick-Sidebottom I flatter myself I shall carry weight.'

There is a characteristic of some persons, not so rare as might be supposed, but subdued in England as a token of ill-breeding, yet one which among foreigners, judging from our experience, is not forbidden by the social code. This characteristic is the sudden transformation of manner and behaviour at the touch of money. We meet with and enjoy ready hospitality, suavity of manner, that lasts till some difference arises about a coin, when all at once the graces we admired give place to roughness, a coarseness and greed quite out of proportion to the amount under dispute. In England we may feel aggrieved, but we strive to conceal our chagrin; not so the foreigner, who

will fall into a paroxysm of fury over a sou or a kreutzer.

Mrs. Sidebottom was a lady of this calibre. Chatty, cordial with those who did not cross her, she was transformed, when her interests were touched, into a woman pugnacious, unscrupulous and greedy. A phenomenon observed in certain religious revivals is the impatience of wearing clothes that takes those seized by spiritual frenzy. In the ecstasy of devotion or hysteria, they tear off their garments and scatter them on the ground. So, when Mrs. Sidebottom was possessed by the spirit of greed, she lost control over herself, she flung aside ordinary courtesy, divested herself of every shred of politeness, stripped off every affectation of disinterestedness, and showed herself in bald, unblushing rapacity. In dealing with Philip about the inheritance of Jeremiah, her masterful pursuit of her own advantage, her overbearing manner, her persistency, had gained for her notable advantages. She had used the privileges of her age, relationship, sex, to get the better of her nephew, and only when her ends were gained did she smilingly, without an apology, resume those trappings of

culture and good breeding which she had flung aside.

Now that all was settled, as she supposed, she was again the woman of the world, and the agreeable, social companion.

‘Yes, aunt,’ said Philip, ‘I am glad we have come to a settlement. If it be not all that I could have desired, it at all events leaves me vastly better off than I was before the death of my uncle. With the help of Providence, and a good heart, I trust that the respectable old house of Pennycomequick will maintain its character and thrive continuously.’

‘You like trade,’ said his aunt. ‘Lambert never could have accustomed himself to it. By the way, there will be no necessity for you to change the spelling of your name.’

‘I have not an intention to do so.’

‘Right. Of course it is as well to keep on the name of the firm unaltered. With us, moving in a higher and better sphere, it is other.’

‘There is one matter, aunt, that has not yet been definitely arranged, and that is the last about which I need trouble you.’

‘What matter? I thought all was done.’

‘That relative to Miss Cusworth.’

‘What about Miss Cusworth?’

‘You surely have not forgotten our compact.’

‘Compact? Compact?’

‘The agreement we came to that she was to receive acknowledgment from us.’

‘Acknowledgment! Fiddlesticks!’

‘I am sorry to have to refresh your memory,’ said Philip harshly, ‘but you may perhaps recall, now that I speak of it, that I threatened to enter a *caveat* against your taking out powers of administration, unless you agreed to my proposition that the young lady should be given the same sum as was invested for her sister, which was the least that Uncle Jeremiah intended to do for her.’

‘Now—what nonsense, Philip! I never heard such stuff. I refused to listen to your proposal. I distinctly recall my words, and I can swear to them. I told you emphatically that nothing in the world would induce me to consent.’

‘The threat I used did, however, dispose you to alter your note and yield.’

‘My dear Philip,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, assuming an air of solemnity, ‘I have taken out administrative authority and have administered, or am in the process of administering.’

‘Exactly. You have acted, but you were only enabled to act because I held back from barring your way. You know that very well, aunt, and you know on what terms I withdrew my opposition. You accepted my terms, and I look to you to fulfil your part of the compact.’

‘I do not find it in the bond,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘I can quote Shakespeare. Come, Phil, I thought we had done with wrangling over sordid mammon. Let us enjoy ourselves. I did not ask you to stay for dinner that we might renew our disputes. The tomahawk is buried and the calumet drawn forth.’

‘It was a bond, not, indeed, drawn up in writing, between us, because I relied on your honour.’

‘My dear Phil, I gave no definite promise, but I had to swear before the man at the Probate Court that I would administer faithfully and justly according to law, and the law was plain. Not a word in it about

Cusworths. I am in conscience bound to stand by my oath. I cannot forswear myself. If there is one thing in the world I pride myself on, it is my strict conscientiousness.'

'The cow that lows loudest yields least milk,' muttered Philip. He was greatly incensed. 'Aunt,' he said angrily, 'this is a quibble unworthy of you. A perfectly clear understanding was come to between us, by the terms of which you were to go halves with me in raising four or five thousand pounds to fund, or otherwise dispose of for the benefit of Miss Cusworth.'

'Four or five thousand fiddlesticks!'

'If I had opposed you,' said Philip grimly, 'some awkward questions might have been asked relative to the cancelled will.'

'What questions?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom, looking him straight in the face with defiance.

'As to how that will came to have the signature torn off.'

'They were perfectly welcome to ask that question, but I defy you to find anyone who could answer it.'

She was right, and Philip knew it. Whatever his

suspicious might be, he was without a grain of evidence to substantiate an accusation against anyone. Moreover, much as he mistrusted his aunt, he could not bring himself to believe her capable of committing so daring and wicked an act.

‘I wish that the old witch-drowning days were back,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘It is clear to me that Salome has been exercising her fascinations upon you. Oh, that she could be pitched into a pool—that one of scalding water, swarming with gold-fish, would suit admirably, because of the colour of her hair. Then sink or swim would be all one—sink for innocence, swim for guilt—clear of her anyway.’

‘Do you seriously mean to evade the arrangement come to between us?’ asked Philip. He would not be drawn from his point to side issues.

‘I never went into it.’

‘I beg your pardon, you did agree to what I proposed.’

‘Upon compulsion. No, were I at the strappado, or all the racks in the world, I would not yield on compulsion. There you have Shakspeare again, Phil. I wonder whether you can tell me from what

play I quote. If you were a man of letters, you would cap my quotations.'

'There can be no question as to what were the intentions of Uncle Jeremiah.'

'Ah, there I agree with you. Having made a preposterous will, he tore it up, to show that he did not intend to constitute Salome his heiress.'

What was Philip to say? How bring his aunt to her terms of agreement? He remained silent, with closed lips and contracted brows.

'Now, look here, Philip,' said Mrs. Sidebottom good-humouredly, 'I have ordered shoulder of mutton and onion sauce: also quenilles of macaroni and forced-meat, and marmalade pudding. Come and discuss these good things with us, instead of mauling these dry bones of business.'

'I have already spoken to Mrs. and Miss Cusworth. Relying on your word, I told them what we purposed doing for them.'

'Then you made a mistake, and must eat your words. What a pity it is, Philip, that we are continually floundering into errors of judgment, or acts that our common-sense reproves, so that we come out

scratched and full of thorns! You will be wiser in the future. Never make promises—that is, in money matters. If you persist in paying the hussy the four or five thousand pounds, I have no objection to the sum coming out of your own pocket. Excuse me, I must laugh, to think how you, a lawyer, have allowed yourself to be bitten.’

‘I do not see how I am to pay the sum you mention without jeopardizing the business. I must have money in hand wherewith to carry it on. If you draw back——’

‘There is no *if* in the case. I do draw back. Do me the justice to admit that I never rushed into it. You did, dazzled by the girl’s eyes, drawn by her hair.’

Philip rose.

‘What—are you going, Phil? Lamb will be here directly. He is at the White Hart, I believe, playing billiards. It is disgusting that he can find no proper gentlemen to play with, and no good players either. Come, sit down again. You are going to dine with us. Some of your uncle’s old port and Amontillado sherry. It must be drunk—we shall hardly move it to York.’

‘I cannot dine with you now.’

‘Why not?’

‘Under the circumstances I cannot,’ he said coldly.

‘I trusted to your honour—I trusted to you as a lady, and,’ he raised his head, ‘as a Pennycomequick——’

‘How spelled?’ asked Mrs. Sidebottom laughingly.

‘I cannot sit down with you now, with my respect and confidence shaken. I trust that you have spoken in jest, and that to-morrow you will tell me so; but I am not fond of jokes—such jokes as these leave a scar. I could not accept my share of Uncle Jeremiah’s property without making recognition of the claims of the Cusworth family. The father died in my uncle’s service; the mother and daughters have devoted themselves to making uncle’s life easy—and now to be cast out! If you hold back, and refuse to pay your share of two thousand pounds, I must pay the entire amount; and if the business suffers, well, it suffers. The responsibility will be yours, and the loss yours also, in part.’

‘Nonsense, Phil; you will not run any risk.’

‘If you had taken your part, and I mine, we could have borne the loss easily ; but if I have the whole thrown on me, the consequences may be serious. Ready money is as necessary as steam to make the mill run.’

‘I don’t believe—I cannot believe—that you, a man of reason—you, a man with legal training—can act such a quixotish part?’ exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom, becoming for the moment alarmed. Then she calmed down again. ‘I see through you, Philip,’ she said. ‘Having failed to persuade me, you seek to terrify me. It will not do. I do not believe so badly of humanity as to think that you will act so wickedly. Come, think no more of this. I hope you like sir-loin?’

‘I refuse to sit down with you,’ said Philip angrily.

‘Then go!’ exclaimed his aunt, with an explosion of spleen. ‘Go as an impracticable lout to your housekeeper’s room, to sup on a bowl of gruel and cottage-pie!’

CHAPTER XX.

A FACE IN THE DARK.

MRS. SIDEBOTTOM was not at ease in her mind after the suggestion thrown out by Philip that the business might suffer if so much capital were suddenly withdrawn from it. She recalled how it had been when her brother Nicholas had insisted on taking out of it his share—how angry Jeremiah had been ; how, for awhile, the stability of the firm had been shaken, and how crippled it had been for some years. She remembered how that her share of the profits had been reduced, and she had no desire to meet with a recurrence of this shrinkage. When Nicholas made that great call on the resources of the firm, there was Jeremiah in the office, thoroughly experienced, and he was able, through his ability and knowledge, to pull through ; but it was another matter now with Philip, a raw hand, in authority.

Then, again, Mrs. Sidebottom knew her brother Jeremiah had contemplated a large outlay in new and improved machinery. To keep up with the times, abreast with other competitors, it was necessary that this costly alteration should be made. But could it be done if four or five thousand pounds were sacrificed to a caprice?

‘Philip is such a fool!’ she muttered. ‘He inherits some of his father’s obstinacy, as well as his carelessness about money. Nicholas no sooner got money in his hands than he played ducks and drakes with it; and Philip is bent on doing the same. Four thousand pounds to that minx, Salome! There goes the church bell. When will Lamb be in?’

Mrs. Sidebottom lit a bedroom candle, and went upstairs to dress for dinner. Whilst ascending, she was immersed in thought, and suddenly an idea occurred to her which made her quicken her steps. Instead of dressing for dinner, she put on her bonnet. The church bell had diverted her thoughts into a new channel. When dressed to go out, she rang for the parlourmaid. ‘Susan,’ she said, ‘I had forgotten. This is a holy day. I believe, I am morally certain,

it is a saint's day, and appointed by the Church to make us holy. We must deny ourselves. So put off dinner half an hour. I am going to church—to set an example.'

Mrs. Sidebottom was not an assiduous church-goer. She attended on Sundays to do the civil to the parson, but was rarely or never seen within the sacred walls on week days. Consequently her announcement to Susan, that she was about to assist at divine worship that evening, and that dinner was to be postponed accordingly, surprised the domestic and surprised and angered the cook, who did not object to unpunctuality in herself, but resented it in her master and mistress.

'If Salome is not at church,' said Mrs. Sidebottom to herself, 'I shall be taken with faintness; fan myself with my pocket-handkerchief, to let the congregation see I am poorly, and will come away at the *Nunc Dimittis*.'

But Mrs. Sidebottom tarried in church through the *Nunc Dimittis*, professed her adhesion to the Creed, and declared her transgressions. As she listened to the lessons, her mind reverted to the quenilles. 'They

will be done to chips !' she sighed, and then forgetting herself, intoned, 'A—men.' At the prayers she thought of the shoulder of mutton, and in the hymn hovered in soul over the marmalade-pudding. Probably, if the hearts of other worshippers that evening had been revealed, they would not have been discovered more wrapped in devotion than that of Mrs. Sidebottom. In the life of St. Modwenna, Abbess of Stoke-on-Trent, we read that this holy woman had the faculty of seeing the prayers of her nuns dancing like midges under the choir roof; they could not pierce the vault, being deficient in the boring organ, which is true devotion. It is perhaps fortunate we have not the same gift. On that evening a row of tittering girls sought to attract the attention and engross the admiration of the choristers. Five young ladies, hating each other as rivals, sought by their attendance to catch the curate, who was unmarried. Old Bankes was there, because he hoped to sell two bags of potatoes to the parson. Mary Saunders was there, because some unpleasant stories had circulated concerning her character, and she hoped to smother them by appearing at church on week days. Mr.

Gruff was there, to find fault with the parson's conduct of the service, and Mrs. Tomkins attended to see who were present.

When the service was concluded, Mrs. Sidebottom came out of church beside Salome, who had been seated in front of her. She at once addressed her.

‘My dear Miss Cusworth, how soothing it is to have week-day prayer. I have had so much of the world forced on me of late, that I felt I must for the good of my soul fly to the sanctuary.’

‘There is always service on Thursday evening.’

‘My goodness!—is this not a saint's day? I thought it was, and I have been so devout, too. You don't mean to tell me there is no special call for it?—and these saints—they are perfectly fascinating creatures.’

Mrs. Sidebottom could talk what she called ‘goody’ when there was need for it; she generally talked it when chance led her into a poor man's cottage. As children are given lollipops by their elders, so the poor, she thought, must be given ‘goody talk’ by their superiors. She put on her various suits of talk

as occasion offered. She had her scandal suit and her pious suit, and her domestic-worry suit and her political suit—just like those picture-books children have, whose one face does for any number of transformation garments, and the same head figures now as a bronze, then as Nell Gwynne, as a Quakeress, or as a tight-rope dancer.

The author at one time knew a bedridden man who had two suits of conversation—the one profane, abusive, brutal, the other pious, sanctified, and seasoned with salt. When his cottage-door was open, the passer heard some such exclamations as these as he approached, addressed to the wife: ‘Now then, you — toad!’ Then a reference to her eyes best left unquoted. ‘If I could only get at you, I’d skin you!’ Then a change, ‘Fotch me my Boible; O my soul, be joyful, raise the sacred hanthem! Bah! I thought ’twas the parson’s step, and he’d give me a shilling! Now then, you gallopading kangaroo!’ This, of course, was an extreme case, and Mrs. Sidebottom was far too well-bred to go to extremities.

‘I was so glad you came in when you did,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘I was really feeling somewhat

faint. I feared I would have been forced to leave at the *Nunc Dimittis*, and I was just fanning myself with my handkerchief, on which was a drop of eau de Cologne, when you came in, and a whiff of cool air from the door revived me, so I was able to remain. I am so thankful! The hymn afforded me such elevating thoughts! I felt as if I had wings of angels, which I could spread, and upward fly!

‘I was late—I could not get away earlier.’

‘And I am grateful to be able to walk back with you. You will allow me to take your arm. I am still shaken with my temporary faintness. I have, I fear, been overdone. I have had so much to try me of late. But when the bell rang, I was drawn towards the sacred building. Upon my word, I thought it was a saint’s day, and it was a duty as well as a pleasure to be there. I am so glad I went; and now I am able to walk back with you, and after public worship—though the congregation was rather thin—the mind is turned to devotion, and the thoughts are framed, are, in fact, just what they ought to be, you know. I have wanted for some time to speak to you, and tell you how grieved I was that I was forced to give your

mother notice to leave. I had no thought of being inconsiderate and unkind.'

'I am aware of that,' answered Salome quietly. 'Mr. Philip Pennycomequick has already told mamma that the notice was a mere formality. The explanation was a relief to us, as mamma was somewhat hurt. She had tried to do her best for dear Mr. Pennycomequick.'

'You will have to induce her to forgive me. What is religion for, and churches built, and organs, and hot-water apparatus, and all that sort of thing, but to cultivate in us the forgiving spirit. I am, myself, the most placable person in the world, and after singing such a hymn as that in which I have just joined, I could forgive Susan if she dropped the silver spoons on the floor and dented them.'

No one would have been more astonished than Mrs. Sidebottom if told that she was artificial, that she affected interests, sympathies, to which she was strange. At the time that she talked she felt what she said, but the feeling followed the expression, did not originate it.

'My dear Miss Cusworth,' she went on, 'I am not

one to bear a grudge. I never could. When my poor Sidebottom was alive, if there had been any unpleasantness between us during the day—and all married people have their tiffs—when you are married you will have tiffs. As I was saying, if there had been any unpleasantness between us, I have shaken him at night to wake him up, that he might receive my pardon for an incivility said or done.’

‘We had made our preparations to leave Mergatroyd,’ said Salome, ‘but my mother has been ill again, and my poor sister has heard of the death of her husband, who fell in a skirmish with the Germans. So when Mr. Philip Pennycomequick was so kind as to ask my mother to remain on in the house, in the same capacity as heretofore, we were too thankful——’

‘What! You stay?’

‘Yes, my mother is not in a condition to move just now, and my sister is broken down with grief. But, of course, this is only a temporary arrangement.’

Mrs. Sidebottom said nothing for a moment. Presently, however, she observed: ‘No doubt this is best, and I am very, very pleased to hear it. Philip did

not mention it—I mean Mr. Pennycomequick. I must not any longer call him Philip, as he is now head of the family, unless the captain be regarded also as a head, then the family will be like the Austrian eagle—one body with two heads. But, my dear Miss Cusworth, tell me, did Mr. Pennycomequick say some foolish nonsense about three or four thousand pounds?’

‘He mentioned something of the sort to mamma.’

‘It is all fiddlesticks,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom confidentially. ‘He is the most inconsiderate and generous fellow in the world. His father was so before him. But it won’t do. The mill will suffer, the business fall to the ground; we shall all go into the bankruptcy court. I respect the memory of my darling brother too highly to wish that the firm he managed should collapse like a house of cards. Philip is generous and all that sort of thing, and he will try to press money on you. You must not consent to receive it, for two reasons—first, because it would smash the whole concern, and next, because people would talk in a way you would not like about you. Do you understand—you could not receive a large allowance from a young

unmarried man. However,' continued Mrs. Sidebottom, 'do not suppose I wish you to waive all expectations of getting anything. I ask you only to trust me. Lean on me and wait; I have your interests at heart as much as my own. I dare say you have heard my brother say he would be driven to adopt improved machinery?'

'Yes, I heard him say that.'

'Very well. My nephew, Philip, must reconstruct the mechanism of the factory at the cost of several thousands. Now, my dear brother did not leave enough money to be used both on this and on satisfying your just claims. If you will wait, say till your marriage—then you may be sure I and my son and nephew will strain every nerve to make you comfortable.'

'Mrs. Sidebottom,' said Salome calmly, 'you are very kind. When Mr. Philip Pennycomequick made the request to my mother that she should stay in the house, she consented, but only temporarily, till he is settled, and has had time to look about him for someone who will be a more active housekeeper than my mother can be; and at the same time it will be a

convenience to us, giving us breathing-time in which to recover from the shock of Mr. Albert Baynes' death, and consider in what manner my sister Janet's future will be tied up with our own. As for that other very generous offer—we had no time to give it a thought, as it came to us simultaneously with the crushing news from France.' Salome halted. 'You have passed your door, Mrs. Sidebottom.'

'Bless me! So I have—I was so interested in what you were saying, and so charmed with your noble sentiments. Can I persuade you to enter and dine with us—only shoulder of mutton, quenilles, and marmalade-pudding.'

Salome declined: she must return immediately to her mother.

'Why!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom, 'bless my soul, here is my nephew come to meet us—I cannot, however, take the compliment as paid to me, for we have parted in dudgeon.'

Philip had left his aunt's house in boiling indignation. She had led him into a trap, from which escape was difficult. He felt himself in honour bound by the proposal he had made to Miss Cusworth; he could

not withdraw from it, and yet at that time to have to find the entire sum mentioned would severely embarrass him. He could not tell Salome that he had been precipitate in making the offer, and crave her indulgence to allow him to put off the fulfilment to a convenient season. The only way out of the difficulty that commended itself to him was to offer Salome an annual sum, charged on the profit of the mill, till such time as it suited her to withdraw her four thousand pounds and invest it elsewhere ; in a word, to take her into partnership.

Having come to this decision, he resolved on preparing it for her acceptance at once, and he descended to the rooms occupied by the Cusworths, there to learn that she had gone to church. He at once took his hat and walked to meet her.

He was ill-pleased to see her returning with his aunt hanging on her arm ; he mistrusted this exhibition of sudden affection in Mrs. Sidebottom for one whom he knew she disliked.

‘ You see, Philip,’ said his aunt, ‘ I thought it was a saint’s day, and the saints want encouragement ; so I went to the parish church. I put dinner off—now

can I induce you and Miss Cusworth to come in and pick a little meat with me?—not bones, Philip, these we have pulled already together. I was taken with a little faintness in church, and Miss Cusworth has kindly lent me support on my way home.'

The little group stood near the doorstep to the house occupied by Mrs. Sidebottom. A gaslight was at the edge of the footway, a few paces lower down the road. Mrs. Sidebottom disengaged her hand from the arm of Salome—then the girl started, shrank back, and uttered an exclamation of terror.

'What is the matter?' asked Mrs. Sidebottom.

'I have seen it again,' said the girl, in a low tone.

'Seen what?' asked the lady.

'Never mind what,' interrupted Philip, divining immediately from Salome's alarm and agitation what she meant. 'We must not keep my aunt waiting in the street. The ground is damp and the wind cold. Good-night, Aunt Louisa. I will escort Miss Cusworth home.'

When Philip was alone with Salome, he said: 'What was it?—what did you see?'

'I saw that same man, standing by the lamp-post,

looking at us. He wore *his* hat and overcoat. Again I was unable to see any face, because the strong light fell from above, and it was in shadow. You had your back to the lamp, and the figure was in your rear. When you turned—it was gone.'

CHAPTER XXI.

HYACINTH BULBS.

THE figure seen in the dark had diverted Philip from his purpose of speaking to Salome about money. He was not particularly eager to make his proposal, because that proposition had in it a smack of evasion of an offer already made ; as though he had speedily repented of the liberality of the first. In this there was some moral cowardice, such as is found in all but blunt natures, and induces them to catch at excuses for deferring an unpleasant duty. There exists a wide gulf between two sorts of persons—the one shrinks and shivers at the obligations to say or do anything that may pain another ; the other rushes at the chance with avidity, like a hornet impatient to sting. On this occasion Philip had a real excuse for postponing what he had come out to say, for Salome was not in a

frame of mind to attend to it; she was alarmed and bewildered by this second encounter with a man whose face she had not seen, and who was so mysterious in his proceedings.

Accordingly Philip went to bed that night without having discharged the unpleasant task, and with the burden still weighing on him.

Next day, when he returned from the factory, in ascending the stairs he met Salome descending with her hands full of hyacinth glasses, purple, yellow and green, and a pair tucked under her arms.

She smiled recognition, and the faintest tinge of colour mounted to her face. Her foot halted, held suspended for a moment on the step, and Philip flattered himself that she desired to speak to him, yet lacked the courage to address him.

Accordingly he spoke first, volunteering his assistance.

‘Oh, thank you,’ she replied, ‘I am merely taking the glasses and bulbs to the Pummy cupboard again.’

‘Thank you in English is the equivalent for *s’il vous plait* and not of *merci*,’ he said, ‘so I shall carry some of the glasses. But—what is the Pummy cupboard?’

‘You do not know the names of the nooks and corners of your own house,’ said Salome, laughing. ‘My sister and I gave foolish names to different rooms and closets when we were children, and they have retained them, or we have not altered them. I had put the bulbs in a closet under the staircase till we thought of changing quarters, and then I removed them so as to pack them. It was whilst I was thus engaged that I saw that strange, inexplicable figure for the first time. Now that I know we are to remain here, I have put them in glasses to taste water, and am replacing them in the dark, in the cupboard.’

‘Have you many?’

‘A couple of dozen named bulbs, all good.’

‘I will help you to carry down the glasses and roots. Where are they?’

‘In the drawing-room. We kept the glasses there all summer in the chiffonnier.’

‘I hope you will be able to spare me one or two for my study.’

‘Of course you shall have a supply in your window. They were procured partly for Mr. Pennycomequick and partly for my mother.’

‘You say “of course”; but I do not see the force of the words. Remember I have had a lodging-house experience; my sense of the fitness of things is framed on that model, and my landlady never said “of course” to anything I suggested which would give me pleasure, but cost her some trouble. I am like Kaspar Hauser, of whom you may have heard; he was brought up in a solitary dark cell, and denied everything, except bare necessities; when he escaped and came among men, he had no notion how to behave, and was lost in amazement to find they were not all gaolers. I had on my chimney-piece two horrible sprigs of artificial flowers, originally from a bridecake, that from length of existence and accumulation of soot were become so odious that at last I burnt them. The landlady made me pay for them as though they were choice orchids.’

‘You must not make me laugh,’ said Salome, ‘or I shall drop the glasses from under my arms.’

‘Then let me take them,’ said Philip promptly; ‘you have two in your hands, that suffices. I tire you with my reminiscences of lodging-house life?’

‘Not at all—they divert me.’

‘It is the only subject on which my conversation

flows. I do not know why it is that when I speak on politics I have a difficulty in expressing my ideas, but when I come on landlady-dom, the words boil out of my heart, like the water from a newly-tapped artesian well. I have a great mind to tell you my Scarborough experiences.'

'Do so.'

'Once when I was out of sorts I went to the sea-coast for a change—but I am detaining you.'

'Well, I will put down the glasses and bulbs in the Pummy cupboard and return to hear your story.'

Instead of going downstairs with Salome, Philip, though he had relieved her of two glasses, went with them to the drawing-room, whence she had taken them—which was in no way assisting her. Moreover, when he was there, he put down the glasses on the table and began examining the names of the bulbs—double pink blush, single china blue, the queen of the yellows, and so on. He had offered to help Salome, but he was doing nothing of the kind; he waited till she had filled the glasses with water, planted a couple of bulbs in them, and consigned them to the depths of

the cupboard. When she returned to the parlour, he was still examining the names of the tubers.

‘Now,’ said he, ‘I will tell you about my landlady at Scarborough.’ He made no attempt to carry down glasses, he detained the girl from prosecuting her work. ‘I was at Scarborough for a week, and when I left my lodgings the landlady charged me thirty shillings for a toilet set, because there was a crack in the soap-dish. I had not injured it. I pointed out the fact that the crack was gray with age, that the discolouration betokened antiquity ; but she was inaccessible to reason, impossible to convince. The injury done to the soap-dish spoiled the whole set, she said, and I must pay for an entire set. I might have contested the point at law ; but it was hardly worth my while, so I agreed to pay the thirty shillings, only I stipulated that I should carry off the fractured soap-dish with me. Then she resisted ; the soap-dish, she argued, could be of no use to me. I must leave it, and at last, when I persisted in my resolve, she let me off with a couple of shillings.’

‘But why?’

‘Because the cracked soap-dish was to her a source

of revenue. Every lodger for years had been bled on account of that crack to the tune of thirty shillings, and that cracked soap-dish was worth many pounds per annum to that wretched woman.' Then, with a sudden tightening of the muscles at the corners of his mouth, he added, 'I know their tricks and their ways! I have been brought up among landladies, as Romulus was nursed by a wolf, and Jupiter was reared among goats.'

'I suppose there are good lodging-house keepers as well as bad ones,' said Salome, laughing.

'Charity hopeth all things,' answered Philip grimly, 'but I never came across one. Just as colliers acquire a peculiar stoop and walk, and horse-dealers a special twist in conscience, and sailors a peculiar waddle, engendered by their professions, so does lodging-house keeping produce a warp and crick and callousness in women with which they were not born. You do not know what it is, you cannot know what it is, to be brought up and to form one's opinions among landladies. It forces one to see the world, to contemplate life through their medium as through lenses that break and distort all rays. Do you recall what the

King of Israel said when the King of Syria sent to him Naäman to be healed of his leprosy ?

‘Yes,’ answered Salome, “‘See how he seeketh a quarrel against me.”’

‘Exactly. And those who live in furnished lodgings are kept continually in the King of Israel’s frame of mind. Whatever the landlady does, whatever she leaves undone, when she rolls her eyes round the room, when she sweeps with them the carpet, one is always saying to one’s self, see how this woman seeketh a quarrel against me. Landladies are the cantharides of our nineteenth century civilization, the great source of blister and irritation. Even a man of means, who has not to count his shillings, must feel his wretchedness in lodgings ; but consider the apprehensions, the unrest that must possess a man, pinched in his circumstances who lives among landladies. Her eye,’ continued Philip, who had warmed to his subject, ‘is ever searching for spots on the carpet, fraying of sofa edges, tears in the curtains, scratches in the mahogany, chips in the marble mantelpiece. I think it was among Quarles’ emblems that I saw a picture of man’s career among traps and snares on every side.

In lodgings every article of furniture is a gin ready to snap on you if you use it.'

Then Philip took up two hyacinth glasses, one yellow, the other blue, but put down that which was blue, and took up another that was yellow, not for æsthetic predilection, but to prolong the time. It was a real relief to him to unburden his memory of its gall, to go through his recollections, like a Jew on the Paschal preparation, searching for and casting out every scrap of sour leaven.

'I dare say you are wondering, Miss Cusworth,' he said, 'to what this preamble on landladies is leading.'

Salome looked amused and puzzled ; so perhaps is the reader.

Philip had been, as he said, for so many years in furnished lodgings, and had for so many years had before his eyes nothing but a prospect of spending all his days in them, and of expiring in the arms of lodging-house keepers, that he had come to loathe the life. Now that his financial position was altered, and before him opened a career unhampered and unsoured by pecuniary difficulties, a desire woke up

in him to enjoy a more cheerful, social life than that of his experience. Now the difference between the days in his uncle's house at Mergatroyd and those he had spent in lodgings at Nottingham did not differ radically. It was true that he no longer had the tongue of a landlady hanging over his head like the sword of Damocles, but his day was no brighter, quite as colourless.

He was beneath the same roof with an old lady who belonged, as his suspicious eye told him, to the same clay as that out of which the landlady is modelled, only circumstances had not developed in her the pugnacity and acridity of the class. In herself, she was an uninteresting person, whom only the love and respect of her daughters could invest with any favour. But those daughters were both charming. His prejudice against Salome was gone completely, that against Janet almost gone. As his suspicions of Salome left, his dislike of Janet faded simultaneously. He had conceived a mistrust of Salome because he had conceived an aversion against Janet ; now that he began to like Salome, this liking influenced his regard for the sister.

The society of his aunt was no gain to Philip. He disapproved of her lack of principle and disliked her selfishness. The tone of her mind and talk were repugnant to him, and Lambert and he would never become friends, because the cement of common interests was lacking.

Philip discovered himself not infrequently during the day looking at the office clock, and wishing that worktime were over ; not that he wearied of his work, but that he was impatient to be home and have a chance of a word with Salome. When he returned from the factory, if he did not meet her in the hall, or on the stairs, or see her in the garden, he was disappointed. It was remarkable how many wants he discovered that necessitated a descent to Mrs. Cusworth's apartments, and how, when he entered and found that one of the daughters was present, his visit was prolonged, and the conversation was not confined to his immediate necessity. If on his entering, the tea-table was covered, he was easily persuaded to remain for a cup. His reserve, his coldness, did not wholly desert him, except when he was alone with Salome, when her freshness and frankness exercised

on him a relaxing fascination ; all his restraint fell away at once, and he became natural, talkative, and cheerful.

‘The fact of the matter is,’ said Philip, ‘I have been lifting the veil to you that covers furnished lodging-house life, and exposing my wretchedness to enlist your sympathy because I am about to ask a considerable favour.’

‘I am sure we need no persuasion to do what we can for you.’

‘It is this. If your mother would not object, I should like to have my meals with you all, just as my uncle was wont. Having everything served in my room recalls my past with too great intensity. I have heard of a prisoner who had spent many years in the Bastille, that in after-life, when free, he could not endure to hear the clink of fireirons. It recalled to him his chains. If there be things at which my soul revolts it is steak, chops, cutlets.’

‘Oh ! it would indeed be a pleasure to us—such a pleasure !’ and Salome’s face told Philip that what she spoke she felt ; the colour deepened in her cheeks, and the dimples formed at the corners of her mouth.

‘And now,’ she said, still with the smile on her face, playing about her lips; ‘and now, Mr. Pennycomequick, you will not be angry if I ask you a favour.’

‘I angry!’

‘Must I enlist your sympathy first of all, and inveigle you into promising before you know what the request is I am about to make? I might tell you that a young girl like me has a little absurd pride in her, and that it is generous of a man to respect it, let it stand, and not knock it over.’

‘What is the favour? I am too cautious—have been too long in a lawyer’s office to undertake anything the particulars and nature of which I do not know.’

‘It is this, Mr. Pennycomequick. I want you not to say another word about your kind and liberal offer to me. I will not accept it, not on any account, because I have no right to it. So that is granted.’

‘Miss Cusworth, I will not hear of this.’ Philip’s face darkened, though not a muscle moved. ‘Why do you ask this of me? What is the meaning of your refusal?’

‘I will not take that to which I have no right,’ she replied firmly.

‘You have a right,’ answered Philip, somewhat sharply. ‘You know as well as I do that my uncle intended to provide for you, at least as he did for Mrs. Baynes. It was not his wish that you should be left without proper provision.’

‘I know nothing of the sort. What he put into my hands was merely an evidence that he had at one time purposed to do an unfair thing, and that he repented of it in time.’

‘Miss Cusworth, that cancelled will still remains to me a mystery, and I do not see how I shall ever come to an understanding of how it was that the signature was gone. From your account my uncle——’

‘Never mind going over that question again. As you say, an understanding of the mystery will never be reached. Allow it to remain unattempted. I am content.’

‘But, Miss Cusworth, we do not offer you a handsome, but a moderate provision.’

‘You cannot force me to take what I refuse to receive. Who was that king to whom molten gold

was offered? He shut his teeth against the draught. So do I. I clench mine and you cannot force them open.'

'What is the meaning of this? Why do you refuse to have my uncle's wishes carried out? You put us in an invidious position.'

Salome had shut her mouth. She shook her head. The pretty dimples were in her cheeks. Her colour had deepened.

'Someone has been talking to you,' said Philip. 'I know there has. Who was it?'

Salome again shook her head, with a provoking smile dappling and dimpling her face; but seeing that Philip was seriously annoyed, it faded, and she broke silence.

'There is a real favour you can do us, Mr. Pennycomequick, if you will.'

'What is that?' asked Philip. His ease and cheerfulness were gone. He was angry, for he was convinced that Mrs. Sidebottom had said something to the girl which had induced her to refuse the offer.

'It is this--mamma had all her money matters

managed for her by dear Mr. Pennycomequick. She did not consult us about them, and we knew and know nothing about her property. I do not know how much she has, and in what investment it is. She did not, I believe, understand much about these affairs herself, she trusted all to the management of Mr. Pennycomequick. He was so clever, so kind, and he did everything for her without giving her trouble. But now that he is gone, I fancy she is worried and bewildered about these things. She does not understand them, and she has been fretting recently because she supposes that she has encountered a great loss. But that is impossible. She has touched nothing since Mr. Pennycomequick died, and what he had invested for her must certainly have been invested securely. It is not conceivable that she has lost since his death. I have been puzzling my head about the matter, and I suspect that some of her vouchers have got among Mr. Pennycomequick's papers, and she fancies they are lost to her. It is of course possible as he kept the management of her little moneys, that some of her securities may have been taken with his. If you would kindly look into this matter for her,

I am sure she will be thankful, and so—without saying—will I. If you can disabuse her mind of the idea that she has met with heavy losses, you will relieve her of a great, haunting trouble.'

'I will do this cheerfully. But this does not affect the obligation——'

'My teeth are set again. But—see! you offered to carry down my glasses, and you have not done so. You have, moreover, hindered me in my work.'

The house-door bell was rung.

'My aunt,' muttered Philip. 'I know the touch of her hand on knocker or bell-pull. I am beginning to entertain towards her some of the feelings I had towards my landladies in the old unregenerate lodging-house days. Confound her! Why should she come now?'

CHAPTER XXII.

YES OR NO ?

PHILIP was right. He had recognised the ring of Mrs. Sidebottom. As soon as the door was opened her voice was audible, and Philip used a strong expression, which only wanted raising another stage to convert it into an oath.

Salome caught up a couple of hyacinth glasses and resumed her interrupted occupation ; and Philip went to the window to remove a spring-nail that incommoded him. There are certain voices which, when coming unexpectedly on the ear, make the conscience feel guilty, though it may be free from fault. Such was that of Mrs. Sidebottom. If Philip had been studying his Bible instead of talking to Salome, when he heard her, he would have felt as though he had been caught reading an improper French novel ; and

if Salome had been engaged in making preserves in the kitchen, she would have been conscious of inner horror and remorse as though she had been concocting poison. The reason of this is that those who hear the voice know that the owner of the voice is certain, whatever they do, to believe them to be guilty of some impropriety; and they are frightened, not at what they have done, but at what they may be supposed to have done.

‘I suppose that Mr. Pennycomequick is in his room,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, passing on, to the servant who had admitted her. ‘It is not his time to be at the office.’

She ascended the stairs to the study door, and in so doing passed Salome, who bowed, and was not sorry to be unable to respond to the proffered hand, having both of her own engaged, carrying glasses.

Philip heard his aunt enter the study, after a premonitory rap, and remained where he was, hoping that as she did not find him in his room she would conclude he was out, and retire. But Mrs. Sidebottom was not a person to be evaded thus; and after having looked round the room and called at his

bedroom door, she came out on the landing and entered the drawing-room, when she discovered him, penknife in hand, removing his spring-nail.

‘Oh!’ she said, with an eye on the bulbs and flower-glasses. ‘Adam and Eve in Paradise.’

‘To whom entered the mischief-maker,’ said Philip, promptly turning upon her.

‘Not complimentary, Philip.’

‘You brought it on yourself.’

‘It takes two to pick a quarrel,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘and I am in the most amiable mood to-day. By the way, you might have inquired about my health this morning, for you knew I was not well yesterday. As you had not the grace to do so, I have come to announce to you that I am better.’

‘I did not suppose that you had been seriously ill.’

‘Not seriously ill, but indisposed. I nearly fainted in church last night, as I told you; but you were otherwise occupied than in listening to me. Now, I want to know, Philip, what was that rigmarole about something or someone seen in the dark?’

‘There was no rigmarole, as you call it.’

‘Oh! do not pick faults in my language. You

know what I mean. What was the excuse made by Miss Cusworth for taking your arm ?

‘ Miss Cusworth did not take my arm.’

‘ Because you had not the wit to offer it ; and yet the hint given was broad enough.’

‘ I am busy,’ said Philip, in a tone of exasperation. His aunt’s manner angered him, so that he could not speak or act with courtesy towards her.

‘ Oh yes. Busy planting forget-me-not and love in a mist. Come, do not be cross. What was the meaning of that exclamation ? I want to know, for I also saw someone standing by the lamp-post, looking on.’

‘ I will tell you, and then, perhaps, you will be satisfied, Aunt Louisa. And when satisfied, I trust you will no longer detain me from my business.’

Then Philip shortly and plainly narrated to his aunt what had happened. He did so because he thought it possible, just possible, that she might be able to explain the apparition.

She was surprised and disconcerted by what she heard, but not for long.

‘ Who has the garden key ?’ she inquired.

‘My uncle had one on his bunch.’

‘And that bunch is in your possession?’

‘Yes, and has not been out of it. It is locked up in my bureau.’

‘Very well, then, the fellow did not get in by that means. Had anyone else a key?’

‘Yes, Mrs. Cusworth.’

‘And is there a third?’

‘No; that is all.’

‘Where was Mrs. Cusworth’s key on the night in question?’

‘I did not inquire. It was unnecessary.’

‘Not at all unnecessary. If the man did not obtain access by your key, he did that of by the house-keeper.’

‘This is preposterous,’ said Philip irritably. ‘You have made no allowance for another contingency—that the door may have been left unlocked and ajar by the gardener, when last at work.’

‘That will not do. The gardener has not been about the place for a fortnight or three weeks. You say that the servants may have allowed a friend to take the pick of Jeremiah’s clothes. That explains nothing

for it does not account for the garden door being unlocked, though it might for the house door being left open. Why should not the Cusworths have needy relatives and hangers-on as well as the servant girls? Needy relatives smelling of beer, with patched small clothes and pimply faces, who fly about with the bats, and to whom the cast-off clothing, the good hat and warm overcoat, would be a boon. Who are these Cusworths? Whence have they come? Out of as great an uncertainty as this mysterious figure. They are creations out of nothing, like the universe, but not, like it, to be pronounced very good. Now, Philip, is not my solution of the riddle the only logical one?

‘This is enough on the subject,’ said Philip, especially chafed because his aunt’s explanation really was the simplest, and yet was one which he was unwilling to allow. ‘You charge high-minded, honourable people with——’

‘I charge them with doing no harm,’ interrupted Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘The clothes were laid out to be distributed to the needy; and Mrs. Cusworth was given the disposal of them. If she chose to favour a relative, who is to blame her? Not I. She would

probably not care to have the sort of relative who would touch his cap for Jeremiah's old suits, come openly to the door in the blaze of day, and before the eyes of the giggling maids. No doubt she said to the moulting relative, "Come in the dark ; help yourself to new plumage, but do not discredit us by proclaiming kinship." '

Philip was too angry to answer his aunt. To change the subject he said, 'Miss Cusworth has refused to receive anything from us. That some influence has been brought to bear on her to induce this, I have no doubt, and I have as little doubt as to whose influence was exerted.' He looked fixedly at his aunt.

'I am glad she has had the grace to do so,' answered Mrs. Sidebottom cheerily. 'No, Philip, you need not drive your eyes into me, as if they were bradawls. I can quite understand that she has told you all, and laid the blame on me. I do not deny my part in the transaction. I am not ashamed of it ; on the contrary, I glory in it. You were on the threshold of a great folly, that jeopardized the firm of Pennycomequick, and my allowance out of it as well. I have stepped in to stop you. I had my own interests to

look after. I have saved you four thousand pounds, which you could not afford to lose. Am not I an aunt whose favour is worth cultivating ; an aunt who deserves to be treated with elementary politeness ?'

Then Philip's anger boiled up.

'We see everything through opposite ends of the telescope. What is infinitely small to me and far away, is to you present and immense ; and what to me is close at hand and overwhelming, is quite beyond your horizon. To my view of things we are committing a moral wrong when technically right. How that will was cancelled, and by whom, will probably never be known ; but nothing in the world will persuade me that Uncle Jeremiah swung from one extremity of liberality to Miss Cusworth, coupled with injustice to us, to the other extreme of generosity to us and absolute neglect of her. Such a thing could not be. He would turn in his grave if he thought that she, an innocent, defenceless girl, was to be left in this heartless, criminal manner, without a penny in the world, contrary to his wishes.'

'Why did he not make another will, if he wished it so much ?'

‘Upon my word,’ said Philip angrily, ‘I would give up my share readily to have Uncle Jeremiah back, and know the rights of the matter of the will.’ He stood looking at his aunt with eyes that were full of anger, and the arteries in his temples dark and swollen. ‘I shall take care,’ he said, ‘that she is not defrauded of what is her due.’

Then he left the room, and slung the door after him with violence, and certainly with discourtesy. Never before had he lost his self-control as he had lost it in Mrs. Sidebottom’s presence on this occasion, but before he had reached the foot of the staircase he had recovered his cold and formal manner.

As he saw Salome come from the cupboard where she was arranging the hyacinths, he bade her in an imperious manner attend him into the breakfast-room, and she obeyed readily, supposing he had some domestic order to give.

‘Shut the door, please,’ he said. The anger raised by Mrs. Sidebottom affected his address and behaviour to Salome. A sea that has been lashed into fury beats indiscriminately against every object, rock or sand-bank. He stationed himself with his

back to the window, and signed to the girl to face him.

‘Miss Cusworth,’ he said, putting his hands behind him, as though he were standing before the hearth and not at a window, ‘my aunt has imposed on your ignorance, has taken a wicked advantage of your generosity, in persuading you to decline the offer that was made you.’

‘I decline it from personal motives, uninfluenced by her.’

‘Do you mean to tell me she has not been meddling in the matter? I know better.’

‘I do not deny that she spoke to me yesterday, but her words did not prompt, they only served to confirm the resolution already arrived at.’

‘But I will not allow you to refuse. You shall have the money.’

‘I never withdraw a word once given,’ said Salome, with equal decision.

‘Then you shall take a share in the mill—be a partner.’

‘I cannot,’ she said hastily, with a rush of colour. ‘Indeed this is impossible.’

‘Why so?’

‘It cannot be. I will not go back from my word.’

‘I have my conscience, that speaks imperiously,’ said Philip. ‘I cannot, I will not be driven by your obstinacy to act dishonourably, unjustly.’

Salome said nothing. She was startled by his vehemence, by his roughness of manner, so unlike what she had experienced from him.

‘Very well,’ said he hurriedly. ‘You shall take me, and with me my share of the mill, and so satisfy every scruple. That, I trust, will content you as it does me.’

The girl was frightened, and looked up suddenly to see if he meant what he said. His back was toward the window. Had he occupied a reverse position she would have seen that his eyes were not kindled with the glow of love, that he spoke in anger, and to satisfy his conscience, not because he had made up his mind that she, Salome, was the only woman that could make him happy.

The Rabbis say that the first man was made male-female, and was parted asunder, and that the perfect man is only to be found in the union of the two severed

halves. So each half wanders about the world seeking its mate, and gets attached to wrong halves, and this is the occasion of much misery; only where the right organic sections coalesce is there perfect harmony.

It did not seem as if Philip and Salome were the two halves gravitating towards each other, for the attraction was small, and the thrust together came from without—was due, in fact, to the uninviting hand of Mrs. Sidebottom.

‘Come,’ said he, ‘I wait for an answer. I see no other way of getting out of our difficulties. What I now propose will assure to you and your mother a right in this house, and Mrs. Sidebottom will be able to obtain admission only by your permission. Do you see? I cannot, without a moral wound and breakdown of my self-respect, accept a share of the mill without indemnifying you, according to what I believe to have been the intentions of my uncle. You refuse to take anything to which you have not a right. Accept me, and you have all that has fallen to me.’

Certainly Philip’s proposal was not made in a tender manner. He probably perceived that it was unusual

and inappropriate, for he added in a quieter tone, 'Rely on it, that I will do my utmost to make you happy ; and I believe firmly that with you at my side my happiness will be complete. I am a strictly conscientious man, and I will conscientiously give you all the love, respect, and forbearance that a wife has a right to demand.'

'You must give me time to consider,' said Salome timidly.

'Not ten minutes,' answered Philip hastily. 'I want an answer at once. That woman upstairs—I mean my aunt—I—I particularly wish to knock her down with the news that she is checkmated.'

Again Salome looked up at him, trying to form her decision by his face, by the expression of his eyes, but she could not see whether real love streamed out of them such as certainly did not find utterance by the tongue.

Her heart was beating fast. Did she love him? She liked him. She looked up to him. Some of the old regard which had been lavished on the uncle devolved on Philip with the inheritance, as his by right, as the representative of the house. Salome had been accus-

tomed all her life to have recourse to old Mr. Pennycomequick in all doubt, in every trouble to look to him as a guide, to lean on him as a stay, to fly to him as a protector. And now that she was friendless she felt the need of someone, strong, trustworthy and kind, to whom she could have recourse as she had of old to Mr. Pennycomequick. Mrs. Sidebottom had been hostile, but Philip had been friendly. Salome recognised in him a scrupulously upright mind, and with a girlish ignorance of realities, invested him with a halo of goodness and heroism, which were not his due. There was in him considerable self-reliance ; he was not a vain, a conceited man ; but he was a man who knew his own mind and resolutely held to his opinion—that Salome saw, or believed she saw ; and female weakness is always inclined to be attracted by strength.

Moreover, her sister Janet had been strong in expressing her disapproval of Philip, her dislike of his formal ways, his wooden manner, his want of that ease and polish which she had come in France to exact of every man as essential. Salome had combated the ridicule, the detraction, with which her sister spoke of

Philip, and had become his champion in her little family circle.

‘I think—I really think,’ said Salome, ‘that you must give me time to consider what you have said.’ She moved to leave the room.

‘No,’ answered he, ‘you shall not go. I must have my answer in a Yes or a No, at once. Come, give me your hand.’

She hesitated. It was a little wanting in consideration for her, thus to press for an immediate answer. He had promised to show her the forbearance due to a wife, he was hardly showing her that due to a girl at the most critical moment of her life. She stood steeped in thought, and alternate flushes of colour and pauses of pallor showed the changes of feeling in her heart.

Philip so far respected her hesitation that he kept silence, but he was not inclined to suffer the hesitation to continue long.

Love, Philip had never felt, nor had Salome; but Philip was conscious of pleasure in the society of the girl, of feeling an interest in her such as he entertained for no one else. He respected and admired her. He was aware that she exerted over him a softening,

humanizing influence, such as was exercised over him by no one else.

Presently, doubtfully, as if she were putting forth her fingers to touch what might scorch her, Salome extended her right hand.

‘Is that yes?’ he asked.

‘Yes.’

‘And,’ said he, ‘I have your assurance that you never go back from your word. Now,’ there recurred to his mind at that moment his aunt’s sneer about his lack of wit in not offering Salome his arm ; ‘and now,’ he said, ‘let us go together and tell my aunt that you take all my share, along with me. Let me offer you—my arm.’

CHAPTER XXIII.

EARLE SCHOFIELD.

PHILIP PENNYCOMEQUICK entered the hall, with Salome on his arm, but she instantly disengaged her hand as she saw Mrs. Sidebottom, and was conscious that there was something grotesque in her appearance hooked on to Philip.

As to Philip, he had been so long exposed to the petrifying drip of legal routine, unrelieved by any softening influences, that he was rapidly approaching fossilization.

A bird's wing, a harebell, left to the uncounteracted effect of silex in suspense, in time becomes stone, and the drudgery of office and the sordid experience of lodging-house life had encrusted Philip, and stiffened him in mind and manner. He had the feelings of a gentleman, but none of that ease which springs out of

social intercourse ; because he had been excluded from intercourse with those of his class, men and women, through the pecuniary straits in which his father had been for many years.

When, therefore, Philip proposed to Salome, he knew no better than to offer her his arm, as if to conduct her to dinner, or convey her through a crowd from the opera.

If he had been told that it was proper for him to kiss his betrothed, he would have looked in the glass and called for shaving-water, to make sure that his chin and lip were smooth before delivering the salute etiquette exacted.

The silicious drip had, as already said, encrusted Philip, but he had not been sufficiently long exposed to it to have his heart petrified.

Many clerks in offices keep fresh and green in spite of the formality of business, because they have in their homes everything necessary for counteracting the hardening influence, or they associate with each other and run out in mild Bohemianism.

Philip's father had existed, not lived, in lodgings, changing them periodically, as he quarrelled with his

landlady, or the landlady quarrelled with him. Mr. Nicholas Pennycomequick had been a grumbler, cynical, finding fault with everything and every person with which and with whom he came in contact, as is the manner of those who have failed in life. Such men invariably regard the world of men as in league to insult and annoy them; it never occurs to them to seek the cause of their failure in themselves.

Philip had met with no love, none of the emollient elements which constitute home. He belonged, or thought he belonged, socially and intellectually, to a class superior to that from which his fellow-clerks were drawn. The reverses from which his father had suffered had made Philip proud, and had restrained him from association with the other young men. Thrown on himself, he had become self-contained, rigid in his views, his manners, and stiff in his movements. When he offered his arm to Salome, she did not like to appear ungracious and decline it. She touched it lightly, and readily withdrew her hand, as she encountered the eye of Mrs. Sidebottom.

‘Oh!’ said that lady, ‘I was only premature, Philip, in saying that your arm was taken last night.’

‘Only premature,’ replied Philip ; ‘I have persuaded Miss Cusworth out of that opinion which you forced on her when you took her arm.’

‘She is, perhaps, easily persuaded,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, with a toss of her head.

‘I have induced her to agree to enter into partnership.’

‘How ? I do not understand. Is the firm to be in future Pennycomequick and Co.—the Co. to stand for Cusworth ?’

‘You ask how,’ said Philip. ‘I reply, as my wife.’

He allowed his aunt a minute to digest the information, and then added :

‘I am unable to ask you to stay longer at present, as I must inform Mrs. Cusworth of the engagement.’

‘Let me tender my congratulations,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom ; ‘and let me recommend a new lock on the garden-door, lest And Co. should bring in through it a train of rapacious out-at-elbow relatives, who would hardly be satisfied with a great-coat and a hat.’

Philip was too incensed to answer. He allowed his aunt to open the front-door unassisted.

When she was gone, he said to Salome :

‘I am not in a humour to see your mother now. Besides, it is advisable, for her sake, that the news should be told her through you. I am so angry with that insolent—I mean with Mrs. Sidebottom, that I might frighten your mother. I will come later.’

He left Salome and mounted to his study, where he paced up and down, endeavouring to recover his composure, doubly shaken by his precipitation in offering marriage without premeditation, and by his aunt’s sneer. He had been surprised into taking the most important step in life, without having given a thought to it before. He was astonished at himself, that he, schooled as he had been, should have acted without consideration on an impulse. He had been carried away, not by the passion of love, but of anger.

In the story of the Frog-Prince, the faithful Eckhard fastened three iron bands round his heart to prevent it from bursting with sorrow when his master was transformed into a loathsome frog. When, however, the Prince recovered his human form, then the three iron bands snapped in succession. One hoop after another

of hard constraint had been welded about the heart of Philip, and now, in a sudden explosion of wrath, all had given way like tow.

When Philip was alone, and had cooled, he became fully aware of the gravity of his act ; and, as a natural result, a reaction set in.

He knew little of Salome, nothing of her parentage ; and though he laid no store on pedigree, he was keenly aware that a union with one who had, or might have, objectionable and impecunious relatives, as difficult to drive away as horseflies, might subject him to much annoyance.

In a manufacturing district, little is thought of a man's ancestors so long as he is himself respectable and his pockets are full. Those who begin life as millhands often end it as millheads, and the richest men are sometimes the poorest in social qualifications.

Mrs. Sidebottom, with feminine shrewdness and malice, had touched Philip where she knew he would feel the touch and would wince. She had put her finger at once on the weak point of the situation he was creating for himself.

Philip was vexed at his own weakness ; as vexed as he was surprised. He could not charge Salome with having laid a trap for him, nevertheless he felt as if he had fallen into one. He had sufficient consciousness of the course he had taken to be aware that Mrs. Sidebottom had given the impetus which had shot him, unprepared, into an engagement. He certainly liked Salome. There was not a girl he knew whom he esteemed more highly. He respected her for her moral worth, and admired her for her beauty. She was not endowed with wealth by fortune, and yet, if she came to him, she would not come poor, for she was jointured with the four thousand pounds which he had undertaken to set apart for her.

That he could be happy with Salome he did not question ; but he was not partial to her mother, whom he regarded, not as a vulgar, but as an ordinary woman. She had not the refinement of Salome, nor the vivacity of Janet. How two such charming girls should have been turned out from such a mould as Mrs. Cusworth was a marvel to Philip ; but then it is precisely the same enigma that all charming girls pre-

sent to young men who look at them, and then at their mothers, and cannot believe that these girls will in time be even as their mothers. The glow-worm is surrounded by a moony halo till mated, and then appears but an ordinary grub, and the birds assume rainbow tints whilst thinking of nesting, and then hop about as dowdy, draggle-feathered fowls.

It was true that Philip had requested Mrs. Cusworth to remain in his house before he proposed to her daughter; it was true also that he had asked to be received at her table before he thought of an alliance; but it was one thing to have this old creature as a housekeeper, and another thing to be saddled with her as mother-in-law. Moreover, it was by no means certain but that Mrs. Cusworth might develop new and unpleasant peculiarities of manner or temper, as mother-in-law, which would be held in control so long as she was housekeeper, just as change of climate or situation brings out humours and rashes which were latent in the blood, and unsuspected. Some asthmatic people breathe freely on gravel, but are wheezy on clay; and certain livers become torpid below a hundred feet from the sea-level, and are

active above that line. So Mrs. Cusworth might prove amiable and commonplace in a situation of subordination, but would manifest self-assertion and cock-a-hoopedness when lifted into a sphere of authority.

According to the classic fable, Epimetheus—that is, Afterthought—filled the world with discomfort and unrest ; whereas Prometheus—that is, Forethought—shed universal blessing on mankind.

For once, Philip had not invoked Prometheus, and now, in revenge, Epimetheus opened his box and sent forth a thousand disquieting considerations. But it is always so—whether we act with forethought or without. Epimetheus is never napping. He is sure to open his box when an act is beyond recall.

In old English belief, the fairies that met men and won their love were one-faced beings, convex as seen from the front, concave when viewed from the rear. It is so with every blessing ardently desired, every object of ambition. We are drawn towards it, trusting to its solidity ; and only when we have turned round it do we perceive its vanity. No man has ever taken a decided step without a look back and a bitter

laugh. Where he saw perfection he sees defect, everything on which he had reckoned is reversed to his eyes.

In Philip Pennycomequick's case there had been no ardent looking forward, no idealization of Salome, no painting of the prospect with fancy's brush; nevertheless, now when he had committed himself, and fixed his fate, he stood breathless, aghast, fearful what next might be revealed to his startled eyes. His past life had been without charm to him, it had inspired him with disgust; but the ignorance in which he was as to what the future had in store, filled him with vague apprehension.

He was alarmed at his own weakness. He could no longer trust himself; his faith in his own prudence was shaken. It is said that the stoutest hearts fail in an earthquake, for then all confidence in stability goes; but there is something more demoralizing than the stagger of the earth under our feet, and that is the reel and quake of our own self-confidence. When we lose trust in ourselves, our faith in the future is lost.

There are moments in the night when the conse-

quences of our acts appear to us as nightmares, oppressing and terrifying us. A missionary put a magnifying-glass into the hand of a Brahmin, and bade him look through it at a drop of water. When the Hindu saw under his eye a crystal world full of monsters, he put the glass aside, and perished of thirst rather than swallow another animated drop of fluid. Fancy acts to us like that inconsiderate missionary, shows us the future, and shows it to us peopled with horrors, and the result is sometimes the paralysis of effort, the extinction of ambition. There are moments in the day, as in the night, when we look through the lens into the future, and see forms that smite us with numbness. Such a moment was that Philip underwent in his own room. He saw Mrs. Cusworth develop into a prodigious nuisance ; needy kinsfolk of his wife swimming as sponges in the crystal element of the future, with infinite capacity for suction ; Janet's coquetry break through her widow's weeds. He saw more than that. He had entered on a new career, taken the management of a thriving business, to which he had passed through no apprenticeship, and which, therefore, with the best intentions, he might

mismanage and bring to failure. What if he should have a family, and ruin come upon him then ?

Philip wiped his brow, on which some cold moisture had formed in drops. Was he weak ? What man is not weak when he is about to venture on an untried path, and knows not whither it may lead ? Only such as have no sense of the burden of responsibilities are free from moments of depression and alarm such as came on Philip now.

It is not the sense of weakness and dread of the future stealing over the heart that makes a man weak ; it is the yielding to it, and, because of the possible consequences, abandoning initiative.

With Philip the dread passed quickly. He had youth, and youth is hopeful ; and he had a vast recuperative force of self-confidence, which speedily rallied after the blow dealt his assurance. When he had recovered his balance of mind and composure of manner, he descended the stairs to call on Mrs. Cusworth.

He found Janet in the room with her. Salome had retired to her own chamber, to solitude, of which she felt the need.

Philip spoke cheerfully to the old lady, and accepted Janet's sallies with good humour.

'You will promise to be kind to Salome,' said Mrs. Cusworth. 'Indeed she deserves kindness ; she is so good a child.'

'Of that have no doubt.'

'And you will really love her?'

'I ought to be a hearty lover,' said Philip, with a slight smile, 'for I am a hearty hater, and proverbially the one qualifies for the other. Love and hatred are the two poles of the magnet ; a weakly energized needle that hardly repels at one end, will not vigorously attract at the other.'

'But surely you hate no one !'

'Do I not ? I have been driven to the verge of it to-day, by my aunt ; but I pardon her because of the consequences that sprang out of her behaviour. She exasperated me to such a degree that I found courage to speak, and but for the stimulus applied to me, might have failed to make a bid for what I have now secured.'

'I am sorry to think that you hate anyone,' said the old lady. 'We cannot command our likes and

dislikes, but we can hold hatred in check, which is an unchristian sentiment.'

'Then in hatred I am a heathen. I shall become a good Christian in time under Salome's tuition. I shall place myself unreservedly at her feet as a catechumen.'

'Sometimes,' said Janet, laughing, 'love turns to hate, and hate to love. A bishop's crosier is something like your magnetic needle. At one end is a pastoral crook, and at the other a spike, and in a careless hand the crook that should reclaim the errant lamb may be turned, and the spike transfix it.'

'I can no more conceive of love for Salome altering its quality than I can imagine my detestation—no, I will call it hate, for a certain person becoming converted to love.'

'But whom do you hate—not your aunt?'

'No; the man who ruined my father, made his life a burden to him, turned his heart to wormwood, lost him his brother's love, and his sister's regard—though that latter was no great loss—deprived him of his social position, threw him out of the element in which

alone he could breathe, and bade fair to mar my life also.'

'I never heard of your troubles,' said Mrs. Cusworth; 'Mr. Pennycomequick did not speak to us of your father. He was very reserved about family matters.'

'He never forgave my father so long as the breath was in him. That was like a Pennycomequick. We are slow in forming attachments or dislikes, but when formed we do not alter. And I—I shall never forgive the man who spoiled my father's career, and well-nigh spoiled mine.'

'Who was that, and how did he manage it?' asked Janet.

'How did he manage it? Why, he first induced my father to draw his money out of this business, and then swindled him out of it—out of almost every pound he had. By his rascality he reduced my poor father from being a man comfortably off to one in straitened circumstances; he deprived him of a home, drove him—can you conceive of a worse fate?—to live and die in furnished lodgings.'

Mrs. Cusworth did not speak. She was a little

shocked at his bitterness. His face had darkened as with a suffusion of black blood under the skin, and a hard look came into his eyes, giving them a metallic glitter. He went on, noticing the bad impression he had made—he went on to justify himself. ‘My father’s heart was broken. He lost all hope, all joy in life, all interest in everything. I think of him as a wreck, over which the waves beat and which is piecemeal broken up—partly by the waves, partly by wreckers. That has soured me. Hamilcar brought up his son Hannibal to swear hatred to the Romans. I may almost say that I was reared in the same manner; not by direct teaching, but by every privation, every slight, every discouragement—by the sight of my father’s crushed life, and by the hopelessness that had come on my own, to swear a bitter implacable hatred of the name of Schofield.’

‘Of whom?’

‘Schofield—Earle Schofield. Earle was his Christian name—that is, his forename. He had not anything Christian about him.’

Philip detected a look—a startled, terrified exchange of glances—between mother and daughter.

‘I see,’ continued Philip, ‘that I have alarmed you by the strength of my feelings. If you had endured what my father and I have endured, knowing that it was attributable to one man, then, also, you would be a heathen in your feelings towards him and all belonging to him.’

The old lady and her daughter no longer exchanged glances; they looked on the ground.

‘However,’ said Philip, in a lighter tone, and the shadow left his face, ‘it is an innocuous feeling. I know nothing more of the man since he robbed my father. I do not know where he is, whether he be still alive. He is probably dead. I have heard no tidings of him since a rumour reached us that he had gone to America, where, if he has died, I have sufficient Christianity in me to be able to say, “Peace to his ashes!”’

He looked at Mrs. Cusworth. The old woman was strangely agitated, her face of the deadly hue that flesh assumes when the blood has retreated to the heart.

Janet was confused and uneasy—but that was explicable. Her mother’s condition accounted for it.

‘Mr. John Dale!’ The maid opened the door and introduced the doctor from Bridlington.

‘Mr. Dale!’ Janet and her mother started up and drew a long breath, as though relieved by his appearance from a situation embarrassing and painful.

‘Oh, Mr. Dale! how glad, how heartily glad we are to see you!’

Then turning, first to Philip and next to the surgeon, Janet said, with a smile: ‘Now I must introduce you—my guardian and my brother-in-law prospective.’

CHAPTER XXIV.

A RECOGNITION.

JEREMIAH PENNYCOMEQUICK remained quietly at his friend's house at Bridlington for some weeks.

‘As so much time has slipped away since your disappearance,’ said John Dale, ‘it does not much matter whether a little more be sent tobogganing after it. I can’t go to Mergatroyd very well just now ; I am busy, and have a delicate case on my hands that I will not entrust to others. If you can and will wait my convenience, I promise you I will go. If not—go yourself. But, upon my word, I should dearly like to be at Mergatroyd to witness your resurrection.’

Jeremiah waited. He had been weakened by his illness, and had become alarmed about himself. He shrank from exertion, from strong emotion, fearing for his heart. In an amusing story by a Swiss novelist, a

man believes that he has a fungus growing on his heart, and he comes to live for this fungus, to eat only such things as he is convinced will disagree with the fungus, to engage in athletic sports, with the hope of shaking off the fungus, to give up reading the newspapers, because he ceases to take interest in politics, being engrossed in his fungus, and finally to discover that he has been subjected to a delusion, the fungus existing solely in his imagination.

Mr. Pennycomequick had become alarmed about his heart ; he put his finger periodically to his pulse to ascertain its regularity, imagined himself subject to spasms, to feel stabs ; he suspected numbness, examined his lips and eyelids at the glass to discover whether he were more or less bloodless than the day before, and shunned emotion as dangerous to a heart whose action was abnormal. The rest from business the relief from responsibility, were good for him. The even life at his friend's house suited him. But he did not rapidly gain strength.

He walked on the downs when the weather permitted, not too fast lest he should unduly distress his heart, nor too slowly lest he should catch cold. He

was dieted by his doctor, and ate docilely what was meted to him ; if he could have had his sleep and wakefulness measured as well, he would have been content, but sleep would not come when called, banished by thoughts of the past, and questions concerning the future.

John Dale was a pleasant man to be with ; fond of a good story, and able to tell one ; fond of a good dinner, and—being a bachelor—able to keep a cook who could furnish one ; fond of good wine, and with a cellar stocked with it. He was happy to have his old comrade with him ; and Jeremiah enjoyed being the guest of John Dale, enjoyed discussing old acquaintances, reviewing old scenes, refreshing ancient jokes.

Thus time passed, and passed pleasantly, though not altogether satisfactorily to Jeremiah, who was impatient at being unwell, and uneasy about his heart.

At length John Dale fulfilled his undertaking ; he went to Mergatroyd to see how matters progressed there. He arrived, as has already been stated, at a moment when his appearance afforded relief to the widow. He talked with Janet, and with Salome ; but

he had not many hours at his disposal, and his interviews with the Cusworths were necessarily brief. He was obliged to consult with Janet about her affairs, and that occupied most of his time. From Salome he learned nothing concerning the will more than what he had already heard. She told him no particulars ; and, indeed, considered it unnecessary to discuss it, as her engagement to Philip altered her prospects.

‘But, bless me, this must have been a case of love at first sight!’ said Mr. Dale. ‘Why, Salome, you did not know him till the other day!’

‘No ; I had not seen him till after the death of my dear uncle, but I, somehow, often thought of and a little fretted about him. I was troubled that dear uncle had not made friends with his brother, and that he kept his nephew at arm’s length. I pitied Mr. Philip before I knew him. I could not hear that he had done anything to deserve this neglect ; and what little was told me about the cause of difference between uncle and his brother did not make me think that the estrangement ought to last and be extended to the next generation. In my stupid way I sometimes tried to bring uncle to another mind, and to think more

kindly of them. I was so grieved to think that Mr. Philip should grow up in ignorance of the nobility and worth of his uncle's character. Do you know—Mr. Dale—one reason why I am glad that I am going to marry Philip is that I may have a real right to call Mr. Pennycomequick my uncle? Hitherto I called him so to himself, and mamma, and one or two others, but I knew that he was no relation.'

'How about the identification of Mr. Jeremiah's body?' asked the surgeon.

'With that I had nothing to do. I was not called on to give my opinion. Mrs. Sidebottom swore to it. The body wore the surtout that I know belonged to Mr. Pennycomequick, but that was all. How he came by it I cannot explain. Mrs. Sidebottom was so convinced that her view was correct that she had an explanation to give why the corpse wore hardly any other clothes. I did not believe when it was found, and I do not believe now, that the body was that of uncle.'

'But you do not doubt that Mr. Pennycomequick is dead?'

'Oh no! of course not. If he had been alive he

would have returned to us. There was nothing to hinder him from doing so.'

'Nothing of which you are aware.'

John Dale heard a favourable account of Philip from everyone to whom he spoke, except Janet, who did not appreciate his good qualities, and was keenly alive to his defects. He could not inquire at the factory, but he was a shrewd man, and he picked up opinions from the station-master, from some with whom he walked up the hill, from a Mergatroyd tradesman who travelled with him in the same railway-carriage. All were decidedly in Philip's favour. The popular voice was appreciative. He was regarded as a man of business habits and integrity of character.

John Dale returned to Bridlington.

'News for you, old boy!' shouted he, as he entered his house, and then looked steadily at Jeremiah to see how he would receive the news he brought. 'What do you think? Wonders will never cease. Salome——'

'Well, what about Salome?'

Jeremiah's mouth quivered. John Dale smiled. 'Young people naturally gravitate towards each other. There is only one commandment given to men that

receives general and cheerful acceptance, save from a few perverse creatures such as you and me—and that commandment is to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth. Salome is engaged to be married.'

Jeremiah's face became like chalk. He put his hand over his eyes, then hastily withdrew it. Dale saw his emotion, and went on talking so as to cover it and give him time to master it. 'I have read somewhere, that in mediæval times in the German cities, the marriageable young men were summoned before the Burgomaster on New Year's Day, and ordered to get married before Easter on pain of expulsion from the city. Bachelorhood was regarded as unpatriotic if not criminal. It is a pity this law was not in force here a few years ago—and that you and I were not policed into matrimony. Now it is too late; both of us have acquired bachelor habits, and it would be cruelty to force us into a condition which we have eschewed, and for which we have ceased to be fitted.'

'Whom is she going to marry?' asked Jeremiah, controlling his emotions by an effort.

'No other than your nephew Philip. I will tell you what I know.'

Then John Dale gave his friend a succinct account of what he had heard. He told him what he had learned of Philip.

‘Do you grudge her to your nephew?’ asked Dale.

‘I do not know Philip,’ answered Jeremiah curtly.

‘I heard nothing but golden opinions of him,’ said Dale. ‘The only person to qualify these was that puss, Janet, and she of course thinks no one good enough for her dear sister Salome.’

Jeremiah’s heart swelled. How easy it would be for him to spoil all the schemes that had been hatched since his disappearance. Philip was reckoning on becoming a well-to-do manufacturer; on founding a household; was looking forward to a blissful domestic life enriched with the love of Salome. Jeremiah had but to show himself; and all these plans would disappear as the desert mirage; Philip would have to return to his lawyer’s clerkship and abandon every prospect of domestic happiness and commercial success.

‘One thing more,’ said Dale, ‘I do not quite like the looks of my little pet, Janet. Her troubles have worn her more than I suspected. Besides she never

had the robustness of her sister. It is hard that wits and constitution should go to one of the twins, and leave the other scantily provided with both.'

Jeremiah said no more. He was looking gloomily before him into vacancy. John Dale declared he must visit his patients, and left his friend.

Jeremiah continued for some minutes in a brown study; and then he, also, rose, put on his overcoat and muffler, and went forth to the cliffs, to muse on what he had heard, and to decide his future course.

The tidings of Salome's engagement were hard to bear. He thought he had taught himself to think of her no longer in the light of a possible wife. His good sense had convinced him that it would be unwise for him to think of marriage with her; it told him also that he was as yet too infirm of purpose to trust himself in her presence.

Could he now return? If he did, in what capacity?—as the maker or marrer of Philip's fortunes? If he took him into partnership, so as to enable him to marry, could he—Jeremiah—endure the daily spectacle of his nephew's happiness?—endure to witness the transfer to another of that love and devotion which

had been given to him ? And if he banished Philip, what would be the effect on Salome ? Would she not resent his return, and regret that he had not died in the flood ? If he were to allow those in Mergatroyd to know that he was alive it would be almost the same thing as returning into their midst, as it would disconcert their arrangements effectually. The wisest course for himself, and the kindest to them, would be for him to depart from England for a twelvemonth or more, without giving token that he still existed, and then on his return he would be able to form an unprejudiced opinion of his nephew, and act accordingly. If he found him what, according to Dale's account, he promised to become—a practical, hardworking, honourable manager—he would leave the conduct of the business in his hands, only reclaiming that share which had been grasped by Mrs. Sidebottom, which, moreover, he would feel a—— perhaps malicious pleasure in taking from her.

He seated himself on one of the benches placed at intervals on the down for the convenience of visitors, and looked out to sea. The sun shone, and the day, for a winter's day, was warm. Very little air stirred,

and Jeremiah thought that to rest himself on the bench could do him no harm, so long as he did not remain there till he felt chilled.

As he sat on the bench, immersed in his troubled thoughts, a gentleman came up, bowed, and took a place at his side.

‘Beautiful weather! beautiful weather!’ said the stranger, ‘and such weather, I am glad to say, is general at Bridlington. Of the three hundred and sixty-five days in the year the average of days on which the sun shines is two hundred and seventy-three decimal four. When we get an interruption of what we regard as bad weather, oh! what murmurers, sad murmurers we are against a beneficent Providence. The so-called bad weather dissipates the insalubrious gases and brings in a fresh supply of invigorating ozone, life-sustaining oxygen, and the other force-stimulating elements—elements.’

Jeremiah nodded. He was not well pleased to be drawn into conversation at this moment, when occupied with his own thoughts.

“‘La santé avant tout,’ say the French,’ continued the gentleman, ‘with that terseness which characterizes

the Gallic tongue—the tongue, sir.’ When he repeated a word he ruffled and swelled and turned himself about like a pluming turkey, and as though believing that he had said a good thing. ‘I agree with them ; I would subordinate every consideration to health, every consideration, sir, except religion, which towers, sir, steeples and weather-cocks high above every other mundane con—sid—er—ation.’ As he pronounced each syllable apart, as though each was a pearl he dropped from his lips, he turned himself about, scattering his precious particles, till he faced Jeremiah. ‘You, yourself, sir, I perceive, are in search of that inestimable prize, health—Hygiene, I mean.’

Mr. Pennycomequick was startled at this random shot, and looked more closely at his interlocutor. He saw a man of about his own height, with long hair, whiskers that were elaborately curled, and perhaps darkened with antimony ; a handsome man, but with a mottled face and a nose inclined to redness. There was a something—Jeremiah could not tell what, it was in his face—that made him suspect he had seen the man before ; or, if he had not seen him before,

had seen someone like him. He looked again at his face, not steadily, lest he should seem discourteous, but hastily, and withal searchingly. No, he had not seen him previously, and yet there was certainly something in his face that was familiar.

‘You are not, I presume, aware,’ continued the gentleman, ‘that there is a very remarkable and unique feature of this bay which points it out specially as the sanatorium of the future. The iodine in the seaweed here—the i-o-dine, sir—reaches a percentage unattained elsewhere. It has been analysed, and, whereas along the seaside resorts on the English Channel it is two decimal four to five decimal one of potass, there is a steady accession of iodine in the seaweed, as you mount the east coast—the *east* coast, sir—till it reaches its maximum at the spot where we now are ; where the proportions are almost reversed, the iodine standing at five, or, to be exact, four decimal eight, and the potass at three decimal two. This is a very interesting fact, sir, and as important as it is interesting—as it is in-ter-est-ing.’

The gentleman worked his elbows, as though uncomfortable in his overcoat, that did not fit him.

‘The iodine is suspended in the atmosphere, as also is the ozone; but it is concentrated in the algæ. Conceive of the advantage to humanity, and contemplate the beneficence of Providence, not only in gathering into one focus the distributed iodine of the universe, but also in discovering this fact to me, and enabling me and a few others to whom I confide the secret, to realize out of the iodine, I will not say a competence, but a colossal fortune.’

‘And pray,’ said Jeremiah, with a tone of sarcasm in his voice, ‘what is the good of iodine when you have it?’

‘What is the good—the good of iodine?’

The gentleman turned round solidly and looked at Mr. Pennycomequick from head to foot. ‘Do you mean to tell me, sir, that you do not know for what purpose an all-wise Providence has put iodine in the world? Why, it is one of the most potent, I may say it is the *only* agent for the reduction of muscular, vascular, osseous, abnormal secretions.’ From the way in which he employed such words as vascular, osseous, abnormal, and secretions, it was apparent that they gave the speaker thorough enjoyment to use

them. 'For any and every form of disorder of the cartilaginous system it is sovereign—sov-er-eign.'

'For the heart also?' asked Jeremiah, becoming interested in iodine.

'For all cardiac affections—supreme. It is known as yet to very few—only to such as know it through me—that Bridlington is a spot so abounding in iodine, so marked out by nature as a resort for all those who suffer from glandular affections, stiff joints, rickets, cardial infirmities—and, according to a system I am about to make public—tubercular phthisis.'

He turned himself about and shook his mouth, as shaking comfits out of a bag, 'tu-ber-cular phthi-sis!'

After a pause, in which he smiled, well pleased with himself, he said, 'Perhaps you will condescend to take my card, and if I can induce you to take a share in Iodinopolis——'

'Iodinopolis?'

'The great sanatorium of the future. A company is being formed to buy up land, to erect ranges of beautiful marine villas, to rear palatial hotels. There is a low church here already, and if we can persuade his grace the Archbishop to help us to a high church

also, the place will be ready, the nest prepared for the birds. Then we propose to give a bonus to every physician who recommends a patient to Bridlington, for the first three or four years, till the tide of fashion has set in so strong that we can dispense with bonuses, the patients themselves insisting on being sent here. What said Ledru Rollin? "I am the leader of the people, therefore I must follow them." He handed his card to Mr. Pennycomequick, who looked at it and saw :

‘MR. BEAPLE YEO,
Financier.’

Every now and then there came in the stranger's voice an intonation that seemed familiar to Jeremiah ; in itself nothing decided, but sufficient, like a scent, to recall something, yet not pronounced enough to enable him to determine what it was in the past that was recalled. Again Jeremiah looked at the gentleman, and his attention was all at once directed to his great-coat.

‘How odd—how strange!’ he muttered.

‘What, sir? what is strange?’ asked the gentleman. ‘That such a splendid opportunity of making

a fortune should lie at our feet—lie literally at our feet, without figure of speech—for there it is, in the seaweed, here it is, in the air we inhale, now humming in the grass of the down? Perhaps you may like——’ he fumbled in his great-coat pocket.

‘Excuse me,’ said Jeremiah, ‘that overcoat bears the most extraordinary resemblance to——’ but he checked himself.

‘Made by my tailor in New Bond Street,’ said Mr. Yeo. ‘Here, sir, is the prospectus. This is a speculation on which not only large capitalists may embark, but also the widow can contribute her mite, and reap as they have sown, the capitalist receiving in proportion as the widow—as the widow. I myself, guarantee eighteen and a half per cent. That I guarantee on my personal security—but I reckon that the return will be at the rate of twenty-four decimal three—the decimal is important, because the calculation has been strict.’

Mr. Pennycomequick ran his eye over the list of managers.

‘You will see,’ said Mr. Yeo, ‘that our chairman is the Earl of Schofield. His lordship has taken up a

hundred and twenty shares of £10 each—the first call is for five shillings per share.’

‘Earl Schofield!’ murmured Mr. Pennycomequick. ‘Earl Schofield! Earl Schofield! I do not know much of the peerage—not in my line—but the name is familiar to me. Earl Schofield!—Excuse me, but there was a great scoundrel——’

‘Hah!’ interrupted Mr. Yeo, and waved his cane, ‘there is my secretary signalling to me from away yonder on the dunes. Excuse me—I must go to him.’

He rose and walked hastily away.

‘How very odd!’ said Jeremiah. ‘I could swear he was in my great-coat.’ He watched the man as he strode away. ‘And that hat!—surely I know that also.’

CHAPTER XXV.

WITHOUT BELLS.

VIRGILIUS, Bishop of Salzburg in the eighth century, condemned the erroneous doctrine held by some that we have antipodes. It was, no doubt, true that men in the Middle Ages had not their antipodes, but it is certainly otherwise now. Where our fathers' heads were, there now are our feet. Everything is the reverse in this generation of what it was in the last. Medicine condemns those things which medicine did enjoin, and enjoins those things which were forbidden. What our parents revered that we turn into burlesque, and what they cast aside as worthless that we collect and treasure. Maxims that moulded the conduct in the last generation are trampled underfoot in this, and principles thought immutable are broken by the succeeding age, as royal seals are broken on the death of the sovereign. If

we were bred up by our fathers in high Toryism, when of age we turn a somersault and pose as Social Democrats ; if we learned the Gospel at our mother's knee we profess Buddhism with the sprouting of our whiskers. The social and moral barriers set up by our fathers we throw down, and just as pigs when driven in one direction turn their snouts the other way, so do we—so do our children ; which is an evidence in favour of Darwinianism, showing that the porcine character still inheres.

It was regarded of old as a canon by romance writers, that the final chapter of the last volume, be it the seventh as in the days of Richardson, or the third as in these of Mudie and Smith, should end with the marriage of the hero and heroine. A cruel and wayward Fate held the couple apart through the entire story, but they came together in the end. And there was a reason for this. Marriage is the climax of the romance of life. It concludes one epoch and opens another, and that which it opens is prosaic. It was concluded, and concluded with some show of reason that a romance should deal with the romantic period of life and finish when that reaches its apogee.

The Parliament of Love at Toulouse in the twelfth century laid down that love and marriage were mutually exclusive terms ; that romance died to the sound of wedding-bells, or at longest lingered to the expiration of the honeymoon. This law has governed novelists ever since. The ingenuity of the author has consisted in devising impediments to the union of the lovers, and in knocking them out of their way as the story neared its conclusion.

But in this revolutionary age we have discarded the rule ; and carried away by the innovating stream the author of this tale has ventured to displace the marriage. Had he been completely lost to reverence for the ancient canons, in his desire to be original, he would have opened his novel with a wedding procession, strutting to the carriages over strewn flowers, holding bouquets, with the pealing of wedding-bells, whilst the bridegroom's man circulates, tipping the parson, the curate, the pewopener, the sexton, the clerk, the bellringers, and all the other sharks that congregate about a bridegroom, as the fish congregate about a ship on board of which is a corpse. But, as the author is still held in check by old rule, or preju-

dice, and yet yields somewhat to the modern spirit of relaxation, he compromises between the extremes, and introduces the marriage in the middle of his tale.

In a novel, a marriage is always built up of much romantic and picturesque and floral adjunct. It is supposed necessarily to involve choral hymns, white favours, bridal veils, orange blossoms, tears in the bride, flaming cheeks in the bridegroom, speeches at the breakfast, an old slipper, and a shower of rice. Without these condiments a wedding is a very insipid dish.

But here we are forced to innovate.

The marriage of Philip Pennycomequick and Salome Cusworth was hurried on ; there was no necessity for delay, and it was performed in a manner so prosaic as to void it of every feature of romance and refinement.

In the parish church there was morning prayer every day at nine, and this service Salome frequently attended.

On one morning—as it happened, a gray one, with a spitting sky—Philip also attended matins, from ‘the wicked man’ to the final ‘Amen.’ When, however, the service was concluded—a service attended by five

Sisters of Mercy and three devout ladies—the vicar, instead of leaving the desk, coughed, blew his nose, and glowered down the church.

Then the clerk began to fumble among some books, the five Sisters of Mercy perked up, the devout ladies who had moved from their seats towards the church door were seized with a suspicion that something unusual was about to take place, and hastily returned to their places. The Sisters of Mercy had with them one penitent, whom with sugar-plums they were alluring into the paths of virtue. It at once occurred to these religious women that to witness a wedding would have an elevating, healthy effect on their penitent, and they resolved to stay—for her sake, for her sake only ; they, for their parts, being raised above all mundane interests. Also, the servants of the vicarage, which adjoined the churchyard, by some means got wind of what was about to occur, and slipped ulsters over their light cotton gowns, and tucked their caps under pork-pie hats, and tumbled into church breathing heavily.

Then Philip, trying to look as if nothing was about to happen, came out of his pew, and in doing so

stumbled over a hassock, knocked down his umbrella which leaned against the pew, and sent some hymnals and church services about the floor. Then he walked up the church, and was joined by Salome and her sister and mother. No psalm was sung, no 'voice breathed o'er Eden,' but the Sisters of Mercy intoned the responses with vociferous ardour, and the penitent took the liveliest interest in the ceremonial, expressing her interest in giggles and suppressed 'Oh my's!'

Finally, after 'amazement,' the parson, clerk, bride and bridegroom, and witnesses adjourned to the vestry, where the vicar made his customary joke about the lady signing her surname for the last time.

The bellringers knew nothing about the wedding, and having been unforwarned were not present to ring a peal. No carriage with white favours to horses and driver was at the door of the church—no cab was kept at Mergatroyd—no rice was thrown, no slipper cast.

The little party walked quietly and unobserved back to their house under umbrellas, and on reaching home partook of a breakfast that consisted of fried fish, bacon, eggs, toast, butter, and home-made marmalade. No guests were present, no speeches were

made, no healths drunk. There was to be no wedding tour. Philip could not leave the mill, and the honeymoon must be passed in the smoky atmosphere of Mergatroyd, and without the intermission of the daily routine of work.

As Philip walked home with Salome under the same umbrella, from the points of which the discoloured water dropped, he said in a low tone to her, ‘I have, as you desired, offered your mother to manage her affairs for her. She has accepted my offer, and I have looked through her accounts. She has very little money.’

‘I do not suppose she can have much; my poor father died before he was in a position to save any considerable sum.’

‘She has about five hundred pounds in Indian railway bonds, and a couple of hundred in a South American loan, and some three hundred in home railways—about fifteen to sixteen hundred pounds in all—that is to say, she had this a little while ago.’

‘And has it still, no doubt.’

‘No; you yourself told me she had met with losses.’

‘She informed me that she had, but I cannot understand how this can have been. I doubt entirely that she met with losses.’

‘But she allowed me to see her book, and she has sold out some stock—in fact, between two and three hundred pounds’ worth. She did that almost immediately after my uncle’s death.’

‘But she has the money realized, I suppose.’

‘Not at all. It is gone.’

‘Gone!’

‘She cannot and will not account for it to me, except by the vague explanation that she had a sudden and unexpected call upon her which she was forced to meet.’

‘But—she said nothing about this to me. It is very odd.’

‘It is, as you say, odd. It is, of course, possible that Janet may have had something to do with it, but I cannot say ; your mother will not enlighten me.’

‘I cannot understand this,’ said Salome musingly.

‘I regret my offer,’ said Philip. ‘I would not have made it if I had not thought I should be met with candour, and given the information I desired.’

When Mrs. Sidebottom heard that the marriage had actually taken place, then her moral sense reared like a cob unaccustomed to the curb.

‘It is a scandal!’ she exclaimed, ‘and so shortly after my sweet brother’s death. A bagman’s daughter, too!’

‘Uncle Jeremiah died in November,’ said the captain.

‘Well, and this is March. To marry a bagman’s daughter in March! It is a scandal, an outrage on the family.’

‘My uncle would have had no objections, I suppose. Philip is as good as Mr. Baynes.’

‘As good! How you talk, Lamb! as if all the brains in your skull had gone to water. Philip is a Pennycomequick, and Baynes is—of course, a Baynes.’

‘What of that?’

‘Mr. Baynes was a manufacturer.’

‘So is Philip.’

‘Well, yes; for his sins. But then he is allied to us who have dropped an *n*, and capitalized a *Q*, and adopted and inserted a hyphen. Mr. Baynes was not in the faintest degree related to us. Philip has behaved

with gross indecency. A bagman's daughter within five months of his uncle's death! Monstrous. If she had been his social equal we could have waived the month—but, a bagman's daughter! I feel as if allied to blackbeetles.'

'Her father was about to be taken into partnership when he died,' argued the captain.

'If he had been a partner, that would have been another matter, and I should not have been so pained and mortified; but he was not, and a man takes his position by the place he occupied when he died, not by that which he might have occupied had he lived. Why, if Sidebottom had lived and been elected Mayor of Northingham in the year of the Prince's visit he might have been knighted, but that does not make me Lady Sidebottom.'

'You call him a bagman,' said Captain Lambert. 'But I should say he was a commercial traveller.'

'And how does that mend matters? Do seven syllables make a difference? A dress-improver is no other than a bustle, and an influenza than a cold in the head.'

'All I know is,' said the captain, 'that his daughters

are deuced pretty girls, and as good a pair of ladies as you will meet anywhere. I've known some of your grand ladies say awfully stupid things, and I can't imagine Janet doing that; and some do rather mean things, and Salome could not by any chance do what was unkind or ungenerous. I've a deuce of a mind to propose to Janet, as I have been chiselled out of my one hundred and fifty.'

'Chiselled out!'

'Yes, out of my annuity. If the will had been valid I should have had that of my own; but now I have nothing, and am forced to go to you for every penny to buy tobacco. It is disgusting. I'll marry Janet. I am glad she is a widow and available. She has a hundred and fifty per annum of her own, and is certainly left something handsome by Baynes.'

'Fiddlesticks!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom.

'I will, indeed, unless I am more liberally treated. I hate to be dependent on you for everything. I wish I had served a *caveat* against your getting administration of the property, and done something to get the old will put to rights.'

Mrs. Sidebottom turned green with anger and alarm.

‘I will go to Philip’s wedding breakfast, or dinner, or dance, or whatever he is going to have, and snatch a kiss from little Janet, pull her behind the window-curtains and propose for her hundred and fifty, I will.’

Lambert’s mother was very angry, but she said no more. She knew the character of her son ; he would not bestir himself to do what he threatened. His bark was worse than his bite. He fumed and then turned cold.

But Philip gave no entertainment on his wedding-day, invited no one to his house ; consequently Lambert had not the opportunity he desired for pulling Janet behind the window-curtains, snatching a kiss and proposing for her hundred and fifty pounds.

‘I shall refuse to know them,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom.

‘And return to York?’ asked her son.

‘I can’t leave at once,’ answered his mother. ‘I have the house on my hands. Besides, I must have an eye on the factory. Lamb, if you had any spirit in you, you would learn book-keeping, so as to be able to control the accounts. I do not trust Philip ;

how can I, when he marries a bagman's daughter? It is a proof of deficiency in common sense, and a lack of sense of rectitude. Who was Salome's mother? We do not know her maiden name. These sort of people are like diatoms that fill the air, and no one can tell whence they came and what they are. They are everywhere about us and all equally insignificant.'

Mrs. Sidebottom had but the ears of her son into which to pour her discontent, for she had no acquaintances in Mergatroyd.

On coming there she had been met by the manufacturers' wives in a cordial spirit. Her brother was highly respected, and they hastened to call on her and express their readiness to do her any kindness she might need as a stranger in the town. She would have been received into the society there—a genial one—had she been inclined. But she was supercilious. She allowed the ladies of Mergatroyd to understand that she belonged to another and a higher order of beings, and that the days in which the gods and goddesses came down from Olympus to hold converse with men were over.

The consequence was that she was left to herself,

and now she grumbled at the dulness of a place which was only dull to her, because of her own want of tact. No more kindly, friendly people are to be found in England than the north country manufacturers; but the qualities of frankness, directness, which are conspicuous in them, were precisely those qualities which Mrs. Sidebottom was incapable of appreciating, were qualities which to her mind savoured of barbarism.

And yet Mrs. Sidebottom belonged, neither by birth nor by marriage nor by acceptance, to a superior class. She was the daughter of a manufacturer, and the widow of a small country attorney. As the paralytic in the sheep-market waited for an angel to put him into the pool, so did Mrs. Sidebottom spend her time and exhaust her powers in vain endeavours to get dipped in the cleansing basin of county society, in which she might be purged of the taint of trade. And, like the paralytic of the story, she had to wait, and was disappointed annually, and had the mortification of seeing some neighbour or acquaintance step past her and enter the desired circle, whilst she was making ready and beating about for an introducer.

She attended concerts, public balls, went to mis-

sionary meetings; she joined working parties for charitable objects, took stalls at bazaars, hoping by these means to get within the vortex of the fashionable world and be drawn in, but was always disappointed. Round every eddy may be seen sticks and straws that spin on their own axes; they make dashes inwards, and are repelled, never succeeding in being caught by the coil of the whirlpool. So was she ever hovering on the outskirts of the aristocratic ring, ever aiming to pierce it, and always missing her object.

A poem by Kenrick, written at the coronation of George III., represents that celebrated beauty and toast, the Countess of Coventry, recently deceased, applying to Pluto for permission to return to earth and mingle in the entertainments of the Coronation. Pluto gives his consent; she may go—but as a ghost remain unseen.

Then says the Countess :

‘ A fig for fine sights, if unseen one’s fine face,
What signifies seeing, if one’s self is not seen ?’

So Mrs. Sidebottom found that it was very little pleasure to her to hover about genteel society, and

see into it, without herself being seen in it. Her descent to Mergatroyd was in part due to a rebuff she had met with at York, quite as much as to her desire to conciliate her half-brother. She trusted that when she returned to York she would be so much richer than before that this would afford her the requisite momentum which might impel her within the magic circle, within which, when once rotating, she would be safe, confident of being able to maintain her place.

‘My dear Lamb,’ said she, ‘I may inform you, in the strictest confidence, that I see my way to becoming wealthy, really wealthy. There is a speculation on foot, of which I have received information through my York agent, to buy up land and build a great health resort near Bridlington, to be called Iodinopolis or Yeoville, the name is not quite fixed. No one is to know anything about it but the few who take preference shares. I am most anxious to realize some of the securities that came to me through my darling brother’s death, so as to invest. The manager is called Beaple Yeo.’

‘Never heard of him.’

‘And the chairman is the Earl of Schofield. Mr. Beaple Yeo and the Earl together guarantee seventeen per cent.—think of that, Lamb!—on their own guarantee!—an Earl, too—and the funds are only three or three and a half!’

CHAPTER XXVI.

HYMEN.

A TWELVEMONTH slipped away, easily, happily ; to none more so than to Philip Pennycomequick.

To the Fates, how strange must seem the readiness with which women plunge into matrimony, and the shyness with which some men look at it ! for matrimony is emphatically an institution designed for the comfort of man irrespective of the interests of the woman. The married man ceases to have care about his meals, they come to him ; he gives no thought to his servants, they are managed for him ; he is not troubled about his clothing, it now hangs together, whereas formerly it fell to pieces.

When the married man prepares to shave, the soap-dish is full, his tidy is clean, his razors in order ; the bachelor finds all in confusion. Before marriage, he

who had a cook was served with India-rubber ; after it, he gets his meat succulent and well cooked. Before marriage, the linen went to the wash, and only half returned, silk handkerchiefs returned as cotton, stockings came odd, jerseys in holes, sheets in rags, and shirt-fronts enamelled with iron-mould ; after marriage, everything returns in good condition and in proper number.

But to the woman, matrimony is by no means a relief from cares. On the contrary, the woman passes through the ring into an arena of battle. We are told by anthropologists that in the primitive condition of society a subdivision of tasks took place ; one set of men undertook to till the earth and manage the domestic animals, whilst another girded on their arms and defended the infant community. These latter, for their services, were fed by the tillers, housed, and clothed with food they had not grown, houses they had not builded, clothing they had not woven. The same subdivision of labour continues still in the family, where the man is the tiller and toiler, and the woman is the military element. She marches round the confines of his house, fights daily

battles with those foes of domestic felicity—the servants. When they oversleep themselves, she routs them out of their beds; when they neglect the dusting, she flies in pursuit to bring them to their duties; when they are impudent, she drives them out of the house.

With what unflagging zeal does she maintain her daily conflicts! How she countermines, discovers ambushes, circumvents, throws open the gates, and charges the foe!

Now consider what was the life of the girl before she married. She had no worries, no warfare; she was petted, admired; she enjoyed herself, indulged her caprices unrestrained, gave way to her humours unrebuked. Her bonnets, her dresses were given to her, she had no care what she might eat, any more than the lilies of the field, only, unlike them, devoting herself to the thoughts of her clothing, for which, however, she had not to pay. Unmarried girls were anciently termed spinsters, and are so derisively still in the banns, for they formerly spun the linen for their future homes; now they toil not, neither do they spin.

Then comes marriage, and all is changed. They enter into a world of discords and *désagréments*. They have to grow long nails and to sharpen their teeth ; they have to haggle with shopkeepers, fight their servants ; whereas the husbands, those sluggard kings of creation, smack their lips over their dinners, and lounge in their easy-chairs, and talk politics with their friends, and smile, and smile, unconscious of the struggles and passions that rage downstairs.

The eyes that, in the girl, looked at the beauties of creation, in the married woman search out delinquencies in their domestics, and defects in the household furniture. The eyes that looked for violets now peer for cobwebs ; that lingered lovingly on the sunset glow, now examine the coal-bill ; and the ear that listened to the song of Philomel, is now on the alert for a male voice in the kitchen. The nose that of old inhaled the perfume of the rose, now pokes into pots and pans in quest of dripping.

From what has been said above, the reader may conclude that the position of the wife, though a belligerent one, is at all events regal. She is queen of the house, and if she has trouble with her servants, it

is as a sovereign who has to resist revolutionary movements among her subjects.

No more mistaken idea can well be entertained. As the Pope writes himself, 'Servant of the servants of Heaven,' so does the lady of the house subscribe herself servant of the servants of the establishment. If she searches into their shortcomings, remonstrates, and resents them, it is as the subject criticising, murmuring at, and revolting personally against the tyranny of her oppressors. So far from being the head of the house, she is the door-mat, trampled on, kicked, set at nought, obliged to swallow all the dirt that is brought into the house.

Marriage had produced a change in Philip. It had made him less stony, angular, formal. Matrimony often has a remarkable effect on those who enter into it, reducing their peculiarities, softening their harshnesses, and accentuating those points of similarity which are to be found in the two brought into close association, so that in course of time a singular resemblance in character and features is observable in married folk. In an old couple there is to be seen occasionally a likeness as that of brother and

sister. This is caused by their being exposed to the same caresses and the same strokes of fortune ; they are weathered by the same breezes, moistened by the same rains. In addition to the exterior forces moulding a couple, comes the reciprocal action of the inner powers — their passions, prejudices — so that they recoil on each other. They come to think alike, to feel alike, as well as to look alike. The man unconsciously loses some of his ruggedness, and the woman acquires some of his breadth and strength. They become in some measure reflectors to each other, the light one catches is cast on and brightens the other, and they mirror whatever passes along the face of the other.

The subtle, mysterious modelling process had begun on Philip, although but recently married. Janet was no longer in the house ; she had returned to France, and as her constitution was delicate had followed advice, and gone to the South for the winter.

Mrs. Sidebottom and the captain had shaken off the dust from their feet against Mergatroyd, and had returned to their favourite city, York, where they resumed the interrupted gyrations about the whirlpool

of fashionable life, and Mrs. Sidebottom made her usual rushes, still ineffectual, at its centre.

Consequently, Philip was left to the undisturbed influence of Salome, and this influence affected him more than he was conscious of, and would have allowed was possible. He was very happy, but he was not the man to confess it, least of all to his wife. As a Canadian Indian deems it derogatory to his dignity to express surprise at any wonder of civilization shown him, so did Philip consider that it comported with his dignity to accept all the comforts, the ease, the love that surrounded him as though familiar with them from the beginning. Englishmen who have been exposed to tropic suns in Africa, have their faces shrivelled and lined. When they returned to England, in the soft, humid atmosphere the flesh expands, and drinks in moisture at every pore. The lines fade out, and the flesh becomes plump. So did the sweet, soothing influence of Salome, equable as it was gentle, fill, relax, refresh the spirit of Philip, and restore to him some of the lost buoyancy of youth. Salome was admirably calculated to render him happy, and Philip was not aware of the rare good fortune which

had given him a wife who had the self-restraint to keep her crosses to herself. That is not the way with all wives. Many a wife makes a beast of burden of her husband, lading him with crosses, heaping on his shoulders not only her own, great or small, but also all those of her relatives, friends and acquaintances. Such a wife cracks a whip behind her good man; drives him through the town, stopping at every house and calling, 'Any old crosses! Old crosses! Old crosses! Chuck them on; his back is broad to bear them!' precisely as the scavenger goes through the streets with his cart and burdens it with the refuse of every house. Many a wife takes a pride in thus breaking the back, and galling the sides, and knocking together the knees of her husband with the crosses she piles on his shoulders.

As we walk through the wilderness of life, burrs adhere to the coat of Darby and to the skirts of Joan. Why should not each carry his or her own burrs, if they refuse to be picked off and thrown away? Why should Joan collect all hers and poke them down the neck of Darby, and expect him to work them down his back from the nape to the heel? Little thought

had Philip how, unperceived and by stealth, Salome sought the burrs that adhered to him, removed them and thrust them into her own bosom, bearing them there with a smiling face, and leaving him unconscious that he had been delivered from any, and that they were fretting her.

We men are sadly regardless of the thousand little acts of forethought that lighten and ease our course. We give no thanks, we are not even aware of what has been done for us. Nevertheless, our wives do not go unrewarded, though unthanked, for what they have done or borne ; their gentle attentions have served to give us a polish and a beauty we had not before we came into their tender hands.

A bright face met Philip when he returned from the factory every day. If Salome saw that he was downcast, she exerted herself to cheer him ; if that he was cheerful, she was careful not to discourage him. Always neat in person, fresh in face, and pleasant in humour, keeping out of Philip's way whatever might annoy him, she made him as happy as he could well be.

Perfectly happy Philip could not be, because unable

to shake off the sense of insecurity that attended his change of fortune. Constitutionally suspicious, habituated to the shade, he was dazzled and frightened when exposed to the light. The access of good luck had been too sudden and too great, for him to trust its permanency. The fish that has its jaws transfixed with broken hooks mistrusts the worm that floats down the stream unattached to a line. The expectation of disappointment had been bred in him by painful and repeated experience, and had engendered a sullen pre-determination to mistrust Good Fortune. He regarded her as a treacherous goddess, and when she smiled, he was sure that she meditated a stab with a hidden dagger.

Such as are born in the lap of fortune, from which they have never been given a fall, or where they have never been dosed with quassia through a drenching spoon, such persons look on life with equanimity. Nothing would surprise them more than a reverse. But with the step-sons of fortune, the Cinderellas in the great household of humanity, who have encountered heart-break after heart-break, it is otherwise. When Fortune comes their way offering gifts, they mistrust

them as the gifts of the Danaï. It is with them as with him who is haunted. He knows that the spectre lurks at hand, and when he is about to close his eyes, will start up and scare him ; when he is merry will rise above the table and echo his laugh with a jeer. So do those who have been unlucky fear ever lest misfortune should spring on them from some unforeseen quarter, at some unprepared moment.

The dread lest there should be a revulsion in his affairs never wholly left Philip, and took the edge off his happiness. He had found little difficulty in acquiring the requisite understanding of the business, and obtaining a firm hold over the conduct of the factory. There was no prospect of decline in the trade. Since the conclusion of the European war, it had become brisk. Peace had created a demand for figured damasks. He had no reason to dread a cessation of orders, a slackness in the trade.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN ALARM.

WITHIN a twelvemonth of his marriage Philip had been given one of the purest and best of the joys that spring out of matrimony—a child, a boy called after his own name, Philip ; and the father loved his first-born, was proud of him, and was fearful lest the child should be snatched from him. As Polycrates was rendered uneasy because he was so powerful, rich, and happy, and cast his most costly jewel into the sea as a gift to the Fates, so was Philip inwardly disturbed with a suspicion that the gloomy, envious Fates which had harassed him so long were now only playing with him, and would exact of him some hostage. What would satisfy them? His commercial prosperity?—his child?—his health? In vain did Polycrates seek to propitiate the Fates by casting

from him his most precious ring. The ring was returned to him in the belly of a fish, and kingdom and life were exacted of him.

‘I never did understand what became of part of your mother’s little property,’ said Philip one evening when alone with Salome; ‘and I think it odd that your mother should be reserved about it to me.’

‘Oh, Philip! It does not matter. After all, it is only two hundred and fifty pounds, and the loss is mamma’s, not yours.’

‘It does matter, Salome. Two hundred and fifty pounds cannot have made themselves wings and flown away without leaving their address. Bo Peep’s sheep left their tails behind them. This money ought to be accounted for. One thing I do know—the name of the person to whom it passed.’

‘Who was that?’

‘One Beaple Yeo. Have you any knowledge of the man? Who is he? What had your mother to do with him?’

‘I never heard ~~his~~ name before.’

‘The money was drawn and paid to Beaple Yeo directly after the death of Uncle Jeremiah. I made

inquiries at the bank, and ascertained this. Who Beaple Yeo is your mother will not say, nor why she paid this large sum of money to him. I would not complain of this reticence unless she had called me in to examine her affairs.'

'No, Philip, it was I who asked you to be so kind as to do for her the same as Uncle Jeremiah.'

'She is perfectly welcome to do what she likes with her money ; but if she complains of a loss, and then seeks an investigation into her loss, and all the time throws impediments in the way of inquiry—I say that her conduct is not right. It is like a client calling in a solicitor and then refusing to state his case.'

'I was to blame,' said Salome meekly. 'Mamma has her little store—the savings she has put by—and a small sum left by my father, and I ought not to have interfered. She did not ask me to do so, and it was meddlesome of me to intervene unsolicited ; but I did so with the best intentions. She had told me that she suffered from a loss which crippled her, and I assumed that her money matters had become confused, because no longer supervised. I ought

to have asked her permission before speaking to you.'

'When I made the offer, she might have refused. I would not have been offended. What I do object to is the blowing of hot and cold with one breath.'

'I dare say she thought it very kind of you to propose to take the management; and there may have been a misunderstanding. She wished you to manage for the future and not inquire into the past.'

'Then she should have said so. She complained of a loss, and became reticent and evasive when pressed as to the particulars of this alleged loss.'

'I think the matter may be dropped,' said Salome.

'By all means—only, understand—I am dissatisfied.'

'Hush!' exclaimed Salome. 'I hear baby crying.'

Then she rose to leave the room.

'Now look here,' said Philip, 'would it be fair to the doctor whom you call in about baby to withhold from him the particulars of the ailments you expect him to cure.'

'Never mind that now,' said Salome, and she kissed

her husband to silence him. 'Baby is awake and is crying for me.'

This brief conversation will serve to let the reader see an unlovable feature in Philip's character. He possessed a peculiarity not common in men, that of harbouring a grievance and recurring to it. Men usually dismiss a matter that has annoyed them, and are unwilling to revert to it. It is otherwise with women, due to the sedentary life they lead at their needlework. Whilst their fingers are engaged with thread or knitting-pins, their minds turn over and over again little vexations, and roll them like snow-balls into great grievances. Probably the solitary life Philip had led had tended to develop the same feminine faculty of harbouring and enlarging his grievances.

The front-door bell tingled. Salome did not leave the room to go after baby till she heard who had come. The door was thrown open upon them, and Mrs. Sidebottom burst in.

This good lady had thought proper to swallow her indignation at the marriage of Philip, because it was against her interest to be on bad terms with her

nephew; and after the first ebullition of bad temper she changed her behaviour towards Philip and Salome, and became gracious. They accepted her overtures with civility but without cordiality, and a decent appearance of friendship was maintained. She pressed Salome to visit her at York, with full knowledge that the invitation would be declined. Occasionally she came from York to see how the mill was working and what business was being transacted.

As she burst in on Philip and his wife, both noticed that she was greatly disturbed; her usual assurance was gone. She was distressed and downcast. Almost without a word of recognition cast to Salome, she pushed past her at the door, entered the room, ran to her nephew and exclaimed, 'Oh, Philip! You alone can help me. Have you heard? You do not know what has happened? I am sure you do not, or you would have come to York to my rescue.'

'What is the matter? Take a chair, Aunt Louisa.'

'What is the matter! Oh, my dear! I cannot sit, I am in such a nervous condition. It is positively awful. And poor Lamb a director. I am afraid it will damage his prospects.'

‘But what has happened?’

‘Oh—everything. Nothing so awful since the Fire of London and the Earthquake of Lisbon. And Smithies recommended it.’

‘What—Smithies, whom you sent here to investigate the books?’ asked Philip dryly.

‘Oh, my dear! It is always best to do business in a business way. Of course, I don’t distrust you, but I am sure it gratifies you that I should send my agent to run through the books.’

‘Well, and what has your agent, Smithies, done now?’

‘Oh, Smithies has done nothing himself. Smithies is as much concerned as myself. But he is to blame for advising me to sell my bonds in Indian railways and put the money into iodine or decimals, or something of that sort, and persuading Lamb to become a director of the company.’

‘What company?’

‘Oh! don’t you know? The Iodinopolis Limited Liability Company. It promised to be a most successful speculation. It had an earl at the head. The company proposed to open quarries for stone, others

for lime, erect houses, hotels, and churches, high and low, make a great harbour, and Beaple Yeo——’

‘Who?’

‘Beaple Yeo, the chief promoter and secretary, and treasurer *pro tem.* The speculation was certain to bring in twenty-five per cent., and he gave his personal security for seventeen.’

‘And have you much capital in this concern?’

‘Well—yes. The decimals grow thicker on this part of the coast than anywhere else in the world, and the decimals have an extraordinary healing effect in disease. They are cast up on the shore, and exhale a peculiar odour which is very stimulating. I have smelt the decimals myself—no, what am I saying, it is iodine, not decimals, but on my soul, I don’t know exactly what the decimals are, but this I can tell you, they have run away with some good money of mine.’

‘I do not understand yet.’

‘How dense you are, Philip! For the sake of the iodine, we were going to build a city at or near Bridlington, to which all the sick people in Europe who could afford it, would troop. There was a crescent to be called after Lamb.’

‘Well, has the land been bought on which to build and open the quarries?’

‘No; that is the misfortune. Mr. Yeo has been unable to induce the landowners to sell, and so he has absconded with the money subscribed.’

‘And is there no property on which to fall back?’

‘Not an acre. What is to be done?’

Philip smiled. Now he understood what Mrs. Cusworth had done with her two hundred and fifty pounds. She also had been induced to invest in iodine or decimals.

‘What is to be done?’ repeated Philip. ‘Bear your loss.’

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SPARE ROOM.

PHILIP insisted on Mrs. Sidebottom seating herself, and giving him as connected and plain an account of the loss she had met with, as it was in her power to give. But to give a connected and plain account of anything affecting the interests deeply is not more easy for some persons than it is for a tipsy man to walk straight. They gesticulate in their narration, lurch and turn about in a whimsical manner. But Philip had been in a solicitor's office, and knew how to deal with narrators of their troubles. Whenever Mrs. Sidebottom swayed from the direct path, he pulled her back into it ; when she attempted to turn round, or retrace her steps, he took her by the shoulders—metaphorically, of course—and set her face in the direction he intended her to go. Mr.

Smithies was a man in whom Mrs. Sidebottom professed confidence, and whom she employed professionally to watch and worry her nephew ; to examine the accounts of the business, so as to ensure her getting from it her share to the last farthing.

Introduced by Mr. Smithies, Mr. Beaple Yeo had found access to her house, and had gained her ear. He was a plausible man, with that self-confidence which imposes, and with whiskers elaborately rolled —themselves tokens and guarantees of respectability. He pretended to be highly connected, and to have intimate relations with the nobility. When he propounded his scheme, and showed how money was to be made, when, moreover, he assured her that by taking part in the speculations of Iodinopolis she would be associated with the best of the aristocracy, then she entered eagerly, voraciously, into the scheme. She not only took up as many shares as she was able, but also insisted on the captain becoming a director.

‘I have,’ Mr. Beaple Yeo had told her, ‘a score of special correspondents retained, ready, when I give the signal, to write up Iodinopolis in all the leading

papers in town and throughout the north of England. I have arranged for illustrations in the pictorial periodicals, and for highly-coloured and artistic representations to be hung in the railway waiting-rooms. Success must crown our undertaking.'

When Philip heard the whole story, he was surprised that so promising a swindle should have collapsed so suddenly. He expressed this opinion to his aunt.

'Well,' said Mrs. Sidebottom, 'you see the managers could get hold of no land. If they could have done that, everything would have gone well. They intended to build a great harbour, and import their own timber, to open their own quarries for building-stone, and burn their own lime, and have their own tile-yards, so that they would have cut off all the profits of timber-merchants, quarry-owners, lime-burners, tile-makers, and gathered them into the pocket of the company.'

'And they have secured no land?'

'Not an acre. Mr. Beaple Yeo did his best, but when he found he could get no land, then he ran away with the money that had been paid up for shares.'

‘And what steps have been taken to arrest him?’

‘I don’t know. I have left that with Smithies.’

‘And how many persons have been defrauded?’

‘I don’t know. Perhaps Smithies does.’

‘This is what I will do for you,’ said Philip.

‘Your loss is a serious one, and no time must be let slip without an attempt to stop the rascal with his loot. I will go at once to York, see Smithies, who, I suspect, has had his finger in the pie, and taken some of the plums to himself, and then on to Bridlington and see what can be done there. The police must be put on the alert.’

‘In the meanwhile, if you and Salome have no objection, I will remain here,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom.

‘I am terribly cut up, am rendered ill. My heart, you know, is subject to palpitations. When you return, I shall see you directly, and learn the result.’

‘Very well,’ said Philip, ‘stay here. The spare room is vacant, and at your service.’

Then he went off, packed his portmanteau, and left the house. He was vexed with his aunt for her folly, but he could not deny her his assistance.

Mrs. Sidebottom shook her head when her nephew

mentioned the spare bedroom, but said nothing about it till he had left the house. Then she expressed her views to Salome.

‘No, thank you,’ she said; ‘no, indeed—indeed not. I could not be induced to sleep in that chamber. No; not a hot bottle and a fire combined could drive the chill out of it. Remember what associations I have connected with it. It was in that apartment that poor Jeremiah was laid after he had been recovered from the bottom of the canal. I could not sleep there. I could not sleep there, no, not if it were to insure me the recovery of all I have sunk on Iodopolis and its decimals. I am a woman of finely-strung nature, with a perhaps perfervid imagination. Get me ready Philip’s old room; I was in that once before, and it is very cosy—inside the study. No one occupies it now?’

‘No; no one.’

‘I shall be comfortable there. But—as for that other bed — remembering what I do——’ she shivered.

Salome admitted that her objection was justifiable, if not reasonable, and gave orders that the room

should be prepared according to the wishes of Mrs. Sidebottom.

‘A precious dull time I shall have here,’ said this lady, when alone in the room. ‘I know no one in Mergatroyd, and I shall find no entertainment in the society of that old faded doll, Mrs. Cusworth, or in that of Salome, who, naturally, is wrapped up in her baby, and capable of talking of nothing else. I wonder whether there are any novels in the house?’

She went in search of Salome, and asked for some light reading.

‘Oh, we have heaps of novels,’ answered Salome. ‘Janet has left them ; she was always a novel-reader. I will bring you a basketful. But what do you say to a stroll ? I must go out for an hour ; the doctor has insisted on my taking a constitutional every day.’

‘No, thank you,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘The wind is blowing, and your roads are stoned with glass clinkers ground into a horrible dust of glass needles that stab the eyes. I remember it. Besides, I am tired with my journey from York. I will sit in the arm-chair and read a novel, and perhaps doze.’

A fire was burning in the bedroom, another in the

study. The former did not burn freely at first ; puffs of wind occasionally sent whiffs of smoke out of the grate into the study. Mrs. Sidebottom moved from one room to the other, grumbling. One room was cold and the other smoky. Finally she elected to sit in the study. By opening the door on to the landing slightly, a draught was established which prevented the smoke from entering the room.

She threw herself into a rocking-chair, such as is found in every Yorkshire house, from that of the manufacturer to that of the mechanic.

‘Bah!’ groaned Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘most of these books are about people that cannot interest me ; low-class creatures such as one encounters daily in the street, and stands aside from. I don’t want them in the boudoir. Oh ! here is one to my taste—a military novel, by a lady, about officers, parades, and accoutrements.’

So she read languidly, shut her eyes, woke, read a little more, and shut her eyes again.

‘I hear the front-door bell,’ she said. ‘No one to see me, so I need not say, “Not at home.”’

Presently she heard voices in the room beneath her

—the room given up to Mrs. Cusworth—one voice, distinctly that of a man.

The circumstance did not interest her, and she read on. She began to take some pleasure in the story. She had come on an account of a mess, and the colonel, some captains and lieutenants were introduced. The messroom conversation was given in full, according to what a woman novelist supposes it to be. Infinitely comical to the male reader are such revelations. The female novelist has a system on which she constructs her dialogue. She takes the talk of young girls in their coteries, and proceeds to transpose their thin, insipid twaddle into what she believes to be virile, pungent English, which is much like attempting to convert milk and water into rum punch. To effect this, to the stock are added a few oaths, a pinch of profanity, a spice of indecency, and then woman is grated over the whole, till it smacks of nothing else.

Out of kindness to fair authoresses, we will give them the staple topics that in real life go to make up after-dinner talk, whether in the messroom, or at the bencher's table, or round the squire's mahogany. And

they shall be given in the order in which they stand in the male mind :

1. Horses.
2. Dogs.
3. Game.
4. Guns.
5. Cricket.
6. Politics.
7. 'Shop.'

Where in all this is Woman? Echo answers Where? Conceivably, when every other topic fails, she may be introduced, just in the same way as when all game is done, even rabbits, a trap and clay pigeons are brought out to be knocked over; so, possibly, a fine girl may be introduced into the conversation, sprung out of a trap—but only as a last resource, as a clay pigeon.

The house-door opened once more, this time without the bell being sounded—opened by a latch-key—and immediately Mrs. Sidebottom heard Salome's step in the hall. Salome did not go directly upstairs to remove her bonnet and kiss baby, but entered her mother's room.

Thereat a silence fell on the voices below—a silence that lasted a full minute, and then was broken by the plaintive pipe of the widow lady. She must have a long story to tell, thought Mrs. Sidebottom, who now put down her book, because she had arrived at three pages of description of a bungalow on the spurs of the Himalayas. Then she heard a cry from below, a cry as of pain or terror; and again the male voice was audible, mingled with that of the widow, raised as in expostulation, protest, or entreaty. At times the voices were loud, and then suddenly drowned.

Mrs. Sidebottom laid the book open on the table, turned down to keep her place.

‘The doctor, I suppose,’ she thought; ‘and he has pronounced unfavourably of baby. Can’t they accept his verdict and let him go? They cannot do good by talk. I never saw anything so disagreeable as mothers, except grandmothers. What a fuss they are making below about that baby!’

Presently she took up the book again and tried to read, but found herself listening to the voices below, and only rarely could she catch the tones of Salome. All the talking was done by her mother and the man—the doctor.

Then Mrs. Sidebottom heard the door of the widow's apartment open, and immediately after a tread on the stairs. Salome was no doubt ascending to the nursery, but not hurriedly—indeed, the tread was unlike that of Salome. Mrs. Sidebottom put the novel down once more at the description of a serpent-charmer, and went outside her door, moved by inquisitiveness.

‘Is that the doctor below?’ she asked, as she saw that Salome was mounting the stairs. ‘What opinion does he give of little Phil?’

Then she noticed that a great change had come over her hostess. Salome was ascending painfully, with a hand on the banisters, drawing one foot up after the other as though she were suffering from partial paralysis. Her face was white as chalk, and her eyes dazed as those of a dreamer suddenly roused from sleep.

‘What is it?’ asked Mrs. Sidebottom again. ‘Is baby worse?’

Salome turned her face to her, but did not answer. All life seemed to have fled from her, and she did not apparently hear the questions put to her. But she halted on the landing, her hand still on the banisters

that rattled under the pressure, showing how she was trembling.

‘You positively must tell me,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘What has the doctor said?’

But Salome, gathering up her energy, made a rush past her, ran up two or three steps, then relaxed her pace, and continued to mount, ascending the last portion of the stair as one climbing the final stretch of an Alpine peak, fagged, faint, doubtful whether his strength will hold out till he reach the apex.

Mrs. Sidebottom was offended.

‘This is rude,’ she muttered. ‘But what is to be expected of a bagman’s daughter?’ She tossed her head and retreated to the study.

Reseating herself, she resumed her novel, but found no further interest in it.

‘Why,’ she exclaimed suddenly, ‘the doctor has not been upstairs; he has not seen baby. This is quaint.’

Mrs. Cusworth did not appear at dinner. Salome told Mrs. Sidebottom that her mother was very, very ill, and prayed that she might be excused.

‘Oh!’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘I suppose the doctor

called to see your mother, and not the baby. You are not chiefly anxious about the latter?’

‘Baby is unwell, but mamma is seriously ill,’ answered Salome, looking down at her plate.

‘Her illness does not seem to have affected her conversational powers,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘I heard her talking a great deal to the doctor; but perhaps that is one of the signs of fever—is she delirious?’

Salome made no reply. She maintained her place at table, deadly pale; and though, during dinner, she endeavoured to talk, it was clear that her mind was otherwise engaged.

Mrs. Sidebottom was thankful when dinner was over. ‘Mrs. Philip will never make a hostess,’ she said to herself. ‘She is heavy and dull. You can’t make lace out of stocking yarn.’

When Salome rose, Mrs. Sidebottom said, ‘Do not let me detain you from your mother; and, by the way, I don’t know if you have family prayers. I like them; they are good for the servants, and are a token of respectability—but you will excuse me if I do not attend. I am awfully interested in

my novel, and tired after my journey—I shall go to bed.’

Mrs. Sidebottom did not, however, go to bed ; she remained by the fire in the study, trying to read, and speculating on Philip’s chances of recovering part if not all of her lost money—chances which she admitted to herself were remote.

‘There,’ said she, ‘the servants and the whole household are retreating to their roosts. They keep early hours here. I suppose Salome sleeps below with her mother. Goodness preserve me from anything happening to either the old woman or the baby whilst I am in the house. These sort of things upset the servants, and they send up at breakfast the eggs hardboiled, the toast burnt, and the tea made with water that has not been on the boil.’

Mrs. Sidebottom heaved a sigh.

‘This is a stupid book after all,’ she said, and laid down the novel. ‘I shall go to bed. Bother Mr. Beaple Yeo.’

Beaple Yeo stood between Mrs. Sidebottom just now and every enjoyment. As she read her book Beaple Yeo forced himself into the story. At meals

he spoiled the flavour of her food with iodine, and she knew but too surely that he would strew her bed with decimals and banish sleep.

Mrs. Sidebottom drew up the blind of her bedroom window and looked forth on the garden and the vale of the Keld, bathed in moonlight, a scene of peace and beauty. Mrs. Sidebottom was not a woman susceptible to the charms of nature. She was one of those persons to whom nothing is of interest, nothing has charm, virtue, or value, unless it affects themselves beneficially. She had not formulated to herself such a view of the universe, but practically it was this—the sun rises and sets for Mrs. Sidebottom; the moon pursues her silver path about Mrs. Sidebottom; for her all things were made, and all such things as do not revolve about, enrich, enliven, adorn, and nourish Mrs. Sidebottom are of no account whatever.

Now, as Mrs. Sidebottom looked forth she saw a dark figure in the garden; saw it ascend the steps from the lower garden, cross the lawn, and disappear as it passed in the direction of the house out of the range of her vision. The figure was that of a man in a hat and surtout, carrying a walking-stick.

‘Well, now,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘this is comical. That man must have obtained admission through the locked garden door, like that other mysterious visitant, and he is coming here after everyone is gone to bed. Of course he will enter by the glass door. I suppose he is the doctor, and they let him come this way to visit the venerable fossil without disturbing the maids. I do hope nothing will happen to her. I should not, of course, wear mourning for her, but for baby I should have to make some acknowledgment, I suppose. Bother it.’

Mrs. Sidebottom went to bed. But, as Beaple Yeo had disturbed her day, so did he spoil her night. She slept indifferently. Beaple Yeo came to her in her dreams, and rubbed her with decimals, and woke her. But other considerations came along with Beaple Yeo to fret and rouse her. Mrs. Sidebottom was a woman of easy conscience. That which was good for herself was, therefore, right. But there are moments when the most obtuse and obfuscated consciences stretch themselves and open their eyes. And now, as she lay awake in the night, she thought of her brother Jeremiah, of the readiness with which she

had identified his body, on the slenderest evidence. She might have made a mistake. Then, at once, the thought followed the course of all her ideas, and gravitated to herself. If she had made a mistake, and it should come out that she had made a wrong identification—would it hurt her?

On this followed another thought, also disquieting. How came Jeremiah's will to be without its signature? Should it ever transpire that this signature had been surreptitiously torn away, what would be the consequences to herself?

As she tossed on her bed, and was tormented, now by Beaple Yeo with his speculation, then by Jeremiah asking about his will, she thought that she heard snoring.

Did the sound issue from the room downstairs, tenanted by Mrs. Cusworth, or from the spare chamber?

Mrs. Sidebottom attempted to feel unconcern, but found that impossible. The snoring disturbed her, and it disturbed her the more because she could not satisfy herself whence the sound came.

'Perhaps it is the cook,' she said. 'She may be

occupying the room overhead, and cooks are given to stertorous breathing. Standing over the stoves predisposes them to it.'

Finally, irritated, resolved to ascertain whence the sound proceeded, Mrs. Sidebottom left her bed. Her fire was burning. She did not light a candle. She drew on a dressing-gown, and stole into the study, and thence through the door (which, on account of the smoke, had been left ajar) upon the landing-place.

There she halted and listened.

The gaslight in the hall below was left burning but lowered all night, and the moon shone in through a window.

I do believe the sound proceeds from the spare room,' she said, and softly she stole to the door and turned the handle.

'There can be no one there,' she thought, 'because I was offered the room, and yet the snoring certainly seems to proceed from it. No one can be there—this must be an acoustic delusion.'

Noiselessly, timidly, she half opened the door. The hinges did not creak. She looked in inquisitively.

The blind was drawn down, but the moon, shining through it, filled the room with suffused light.

Mrs. Sidebottom's eyes sought the bed. On it, where had lain the body found in the canal, and much in the same position as that had been placed there, lay the figure of a man, black against the white coverlet, in a great-coat. The face was not visible—the curtain interposed and concealed it.

Mrs. Sidebottom's heart stood still. A sense of sickness and faintness stole over her. She dared not take a step further to obtain a glimpse of the face, and she feared to see it.

With trembling hand she closed the door, and stood on the landing with beating heart, recovering herself. 'What a fool I am to be frightened!' she said, after a minute, and with a sigh of relief. 'Of course—the doctor.'

CHAPTER XXIX.

RECOGNITION.

IN one of his essays, Goldsmith relates the anecdote of a painter who set up a picture in the market-place, with a pot of black paint and a brush beside it, and the inscription, 'Please indicate faults.'

When in the evening he revisited his picture, he found it smudged out eventually, as everyone had discovered and marked out a blemish. Next day he set up a replica of the picture, with paint and brush as before, and the inscription, 'Please indicate beauties.'

By evening, the entire canvas was covered with black. Everyone had found a beauty, where previously everyone had detected a fault.

The modern novelist sends his work into the great forum, and without inviting, expects criticism. The printer's ink is always available wherewith to draw

attention to his defects. In Goldsmith's apologue the critics found beauties, in the present they see only blemishes, which they dab at venomously, and the sorrowful author sits at evening over his despised and bespattered production, bewildered, and ashamed to find that his earnest work, that has called out his most generous feelings, over which he has fagged and worn himself, is a mass of blunders a tissue of faults.

Now, one of the salient defects in the work of the author of this story, according to his reviewers, is that he makes his personages talk more smartly than they would naturally. But, he asks, would it be tolerable to the reader, would it be just to the printer—to force upon them the literal transcript of the ordinary conversation that passes between people every day? When we were schoolboys we had a pudding served to us on Wednesdays which we call milestone pudding, not because it was hard, but because it was a plum-pudding with a mile between the plums. Is there not a good mile between our *bon mots*? Is it legitimate art, is it kind, to make the reader pursue a conversation through several pages of talk void of thought, stuffed with matter of everyday interest? Is

it not more artistic, and more humane, to steam the whole down to an essence, and then—well, add a grain of salt and a pinch of spice?

The reader shall be the judge. We will take the morning dialogue between Mrs. Sidebottom and Salome at breakfast.

‘Good-morning, Mrs. Sidebottom.’

‘I wish you good-morning, Salome.’

Author : Cannot that be taken for granted? May it not be struck out with advantage?

‘I hope you slept well,’ said Salome.

‘Only so so. How is your poor mother?’

‘Not much better, thank you.’

‘And darling baby?’

‘About the same. We have, indeed, a sick house. Tea or coffee, please?’

‘Tea, please.’

‘Sugar?’

‘Sugar, please.’

‘How many lumps?’

‘Two will suffice.’

‘I think you will find some grilled rabbit. Would you prefer buttered egg?’

‘Thank you, rabbit,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘I will help myself.’

‘I hope your room was comfortable. You must excuse us, we are all much upset in the house, servants as well as the rest. We have had a good deal to upset us of late, and when we are upset it upsets the servants too.’

Author: Now, there! Because we have dared to copy down, word for word, what was said at breakfast, our heroine has revealed herself as tautological. There were positively four upsets in that one little sentence. And we are convinced that if the reader had to express the same sentiment he or she would not be nice as to the literary form in which the sentence was couched, would not cast it thus—‘We have been much upset; we have had much of late to disturb our equilibrium, and when we are thrown out of our balance then the servants as well are affected.’ That would be better, no doubt, but the reader would not speak thus, and Salome did not.

The author must be allowed to exercise his judgment and give only as much of the conversation as is necessary, and not be obliged to record the grammatical

slips, the clumsy constructions, the tedious repetitions that disfigure our ordinary conversation.

The English language is so simple in structure that it invites a profligate usage of it ; it allows us to pour forth a flood of words without having first thought out what we intended to say. The sentences tumble higgledy-piggledy from our lips like children from an untidy nursery—some unclothed, one short of a shoe, and another over-hatted. Do we get the Paliamentary debates as they were conducted ? Where are the ‘hems’ and ‘haws,’ the ‘I means’ and ‘you knows’ ? What has become in print of the vain repetitions and the unfinished sentences ? Is not all that put into order by the judicious reporter ? In like manner the novelist is armed with the reporter’s powers, and exercising the same discretion passes the words of his creations through the same mill. Using, therefore, the privilege of a reporter, we will once more enter the gallery and take down the conversation that ensued at the breakfast-table between Mrs. Sidebottom and Salome.

‘My dear Mrs. P.,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘I hope that you were not obliged to call up the doctor in the night.’

‘No,’ answered Salome, raising her eyebrows.

‘But what is the matter with your mother?’

‘She has long suffered from heart complaint, and recently she has had much to trouble her. She has had a great shock and is really very unwell, and so is dear baby also; and between both and—and—other matters, I hardly know what I am about.’

‘So I perceive,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom; ‘you have upset the cream.’

Salome had a worn and scared look. Her face had lost every particle of colour the day before. It remained as pale now. She looked as if she had not slept. Her eyes were sunken and red.

‘My dear,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘never give in. If I had given in to all the trials that have beset me I should have been worn to fiddle-strings. My first real trial was the lost of Sidebottom, and the serious reduction of my income in consequence; for though he called a house an ’ouse, yet he was in good practice. There is a silver lining to every cloud. I don’t suppose I could have got into good society so long as Sidebottom lived, with his dissipated habits about his *h*’s. His aspirate stood during our married life as a wall

between us, like that—like that which separated Pyramus from Thisbe.’

Salome made no answer.

‘You can have no idea,’ continued Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘how startled I was in the night by the snoring of the doctor.’

‘The doctor?’ Salome looked up surprised.

‘Yes—he slept, you know, in the spare room.’

A rush of crimson mounted to Salome’s cheeks, and then faded from them, leaving them such an ashy gray as succeeds the Alpengluth on the snow peaks at sundown.

‘Do you know?—well, really, I must confess my weakness—I was made quite nervous by the snoring. I was so anxious, naturally so anxious for your poor dear mother, and I thought the sounds might proceed from her, and if so I trembled lest they portended apoplexy. Then again, I could not make out whence the snoring proceeded. So, being of an inquiring mind—my dear, if we had not inquiring minds we should not have made Polar expeditions, and discovered the electric telegraph, and measured the distances of the planets—I was resolved to satisfy

myself as to those sounds, and I stole out of my room and listened on the landing; and when I was satisfied that the snoring issued from the spare apartment, which I had supposed to be empty, I had the boldness to open the door and peep in.'

'At what o'clock?' asked Salome faintly.

'Oh! gracious goodness, I cannot tell. Somewhere in the small hours. You must know that as I looked out of my window before going to bed I saw the doctor coming through the garden. The moon was shining, and I adore the moon, so I stood at my window in quite a poetic frame. I suppose you told him to come through the garden so as not to disturb the household.'

Salome hesitated. She was trying to pour out a second cup of tea for Mrs. Sidebottom, but her hand shook, and she was obliged to set down the pot. She breathed painfully, and looked at Mrs. Sidebottom with a daze of terror in her eyes.

'Thank you,' said the lady, 'I said I would have a little more tea. Bless me! How your feelings have overcome you. Family affection is charming, idyllic, but—don't spill the tea as you did the cream.'

‘Would you kindly pour out for yourself?’ asked Salome. ‘It is true that my hand shakes. I am not very well this morning.’

‘Delighted. As I was saying,’ pursued Mrs. Sidebottom, drawing the teapot, sugar-basin, and cream-jug to herself—‘as I was saying, in the small hours of the night I was aroused by the snoring and could not sleep. So I rose, and opened the spare room door and looked in.’

Salome’s frightened eyes were riveted on her.

‘I looked in, and saw a man lying on the bed. I could not see his face. The curtain was in the way, and there was no light save that of the moon. At first I was frightened, and inclined to cry out for salvolatile, I was so faint. But after a moment or two I recovered myself. This man had on more clothing than—that other one. He wore boots and so on. After the first spasm of dismay I recovered myself, for I said, “It is the doctor sleeping in the house because Mrs. Cusworth is ill.” It was the doctor, was it not?’

Salome’s scared face, her strange manner, now for the first time inspired Mrs. Sidebottom with the sus-

picion that she had not hit on the true solution of the mystery.

‘But, goodness gracious me!’ she exclaimed, ‘if it was not the doctor, who could it be? And in the house at night—as on that former occasion—and when Philip is absent, too!’

Salome started from her seat.

‘Excuse me,’ she said hastily, ‘I am—I am unwell.’

She tottered to the door.

Mrs. Sidebottom, with kindled suspicion, rose also, and deserted an unfinished egg and some buttered toast to go after her. Salome had opened the door and passed through. Before she could close it behind her, Mrs. Sidebottom had grasped it and was at her heels, asking if she really were ill, and if she needed help.

At the same moment that both entered the hall, they saw a man descending the stairs, a man in hat and great-coat, with a leather bag in one hand and a cane in the other. He wore his hair long, and had dark whiskers, curled, but not in the freshest of curls. His nose was red, and his face mottled.

‘ Mr. Beaple Yeo !’ shrieked Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘ My money ! I want—I will have my money !’

The man stood for a moment irresolute on the stairs.

Then a key was turned in the front-door lock, and Philip appeared from the street—returned by an early train.

‘ Oh, Philip !’ screamed Mrs. Sidebottom. ‘ Here is the man—Beaple Yeo himself ! Has been hiding in the spare bedroom all night. He has my money.’

In an instant, the man darted into Mrs. Cusworth’s room, and locked the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXX.

EXEUNT.

THE man descending the stairs had hesitated, and his hesitation had lost him. Had he made a dash at Mrs. Sidebottom and Salome, swept them aside and gone down the passage to the garden door, he would have escaped before Philip entered. But the sight of Mrs. Sidebottom, her vehement demand for her money, made him turn from her and fly into Mrs. Cusworth's room. Thence he, no doubt, thought to escape to the garden, through the window.

For some moments, after Philip appeared and Mrs. Sidebottom had told him that the swindler was in his house, all three—he, Salome, and Mrs. Sidebottom, stood in the hall, silent.

Then a servant, alarmed by the cry, appeared from the kitchen, and Philip at once bade her hasten after a policeman.

Salome laid her hand on his arm and said suppliantly, 'No, Philip ; no, please !'

But he disregarded her intervention, and renewed the command to the servant, who at once disappeared to obey it.

Then he strode towards the door leading to Mrs. Cusworth's apartments, but Salome, quick as thought, threw herself in his way, and stood against the door, with outstretched arms.

'No, Philip ; not—not, if you love me.'

'Why not ?'—spoken sternly.

'Because——' She faltered, her face bowed on her bosom ; then she recovered herself, looked him entreatingly in the eyes, and said, 'I will tell you afterwards—in private. I cannot now. Oh, Philip—I beseech you !'

'Salome,' said her husband very gravely, 'that man is in there.'

'I know, I know he is,' she answered timorously.

'Oh, Philip, don't mind her. He will get away, and he has my money !' entreated Mrs. Sidebottom on her part.

'Why do you seek to shelter him ?' asked Philip of his wife, ignoring the words of his aunt.

‘I cannot tell you now. Will you not trust me? Do allow him to escape.’

‘Salome!’ exclaimed Philip, in such a tone as made her shiver, it expressed so much indignation.

She could say no more in urgency of what she had asked, but looked at him steadily with her great imploring eyes.

Mrs. Sidebottom was not silent; she poured in a discharge of canister, and was cut short by Philip, who, turning sternly to her, said:

‘I request your silence. The scoundrel cannot escape. The windows of both rooms are barred, because on the ground floor. He cannot break forth. I have him as in a trap. It is merely a question with me—which my wife must help me to decide—whether to burst open the door now, or wait till the arrival of the constable.’

Then Salome slowly, with heaving breast, and without taking her eyes off her husband’s face, let fall her arms and stood back. But even then, as he put his foot against the door, she thrust forth her hand against Mrs. Sidebottom, and said: ‘Not she! No, Philip, as you honour me! If you love me—not she!’

Then he turned and said to Mrs. Sidebottom : ‘ Aunt, I must ask you to remain in the hall. When the maid rings the front door bell, open and let her and the constable in, and bring them at once into Mrs. Cusworth’s apartments. Do not enter before.’

He did not burst open the door till he had knocked thrice, and his knock had remained unnoticed. Then, with foot and shoulder against it, he drove it in, and the lock torn off fell on the floor. Instantly, Salome entered after him and shut the door behind her, and stood against it.

The old suspicion, sullenness, and doggedness which Philip had nurtured in him through long years of discouragement and distress, evil tempers that had been laid to sleep for a twelvemonth, rose full of energy to life again. He was angered at the thought that the wretch whom he was pursuing should have taken refuge under his own roof, and worst of all, that his own wife should spread out her arms to protect him.

The hero of a story should be without such blemishes that take from him all lustre and rob him of sympathy. But the reader must consider these evil passions in him as bred of his early experience. They grew

necessarily in him, because the seed was sown in him when his heart was receptive, and rich to receive whatever crop was sown there. And again, we may ask: Is the reader free from evil tempers, constitutional or acquired? The history of life is the history of man mastering or being mastered by these; and such is the history of Philip.

In the sitting-room stood a scared group, looking at one another. Mrs. Cusworth by the fireplace, pale as chalk, hardly able to stand, unable to utter a word of explanation or protest, and Beaple Yeo, with his hat on, wearing a great-coat that Philip knew at once—that of his deceased uncle, holding a leather bag in his hand, to which a strap was attached that he was endeavouring to sling over his shoulder, but was incommoded by his cane, of which he did not let go. His face was mottled and his nose very purple—but he had not, like Mrs. Cusworth, lost his presence of mind.

Philip looked hard at him, then his face became hard as marble, and he said, ‘So—we meet—Schofield.’

The man had forgotten to remove his hat when attempting to put the strap over his head, and so failed; he at once hastily passed the cane into the hand that

held the bag, and said with an air of forced joviality, as he extended his right palm, 'How d'y' do, my boy? glad to see you.'

'Put down that bag,' ordered Philip, ignoring the offered hand. 'Or, here, give it me.'

'No, thank y', my son; got my night togs in there—comb and brush and whisker-curlers.'

'Schofield,' said Philip grimly, 'I have sent for the constable. He will be here in two or three minutes. Give me up that bag. I shall have you arrested in this room.'

'No, you won't, my dear boy,' answered the fellow. 'But, by jove, it isn't kindly—not kindly—hardly what we look for in our children. But, Lord bless you! bless you, the world is becoming frightfully neglectful of the commandment with promise—with promise, my son.'

The impudence of the man, his audacity, and his manner, worked Philip into anger; not the cold bitter anger that had risen before, but hot and flaming.

'Come, no nonsense. Give me that bag now, or I'll take it from you. There is a warrant out for your arrest as Beaple Yeo.' He put his hand forward to

snatch the bag from the fellow, but Beaple Yeo—or Schofield quickly brought his stick round.

‘My pippin!’ said he, ‘take care; I have a needle in this, that will run you through if you touch me—though you are my son.’

Philip closed with him, wrenched the stick from him and placed it behind him. But Beaple would not be deprived of his weapon without an effort to recover it, and he made a rush at Philip to beat him aside, as he drew back, which would have led to a fresh test of strength, had not Salome thrown herself between them, and clinging to her husband said, ‘Oh, Philip! Philip! He is my father!’

Philip stood back, and he and Schofield faced each other in silence, the latter with his eye on Philip to note how he received the news. Philip grew grayer in tint, and every line in his face deepened; his eyes became more like Cairngorm stones than ever—cold, hard, almost inanimate.

‘It is true,’ said Schofield; ‘my chuck has told you the fact—the very fact. Why should it have been kept from you so long?—so long? The Schofields are a family as good as the Pennycomequicks, and

the name is not so much of a mouthfiller, which, at least, is a consolation—a consolation. Now, perhaps, son-in-law, you will allow me to step by? No? Upon my word there would be something un-Christian—something to shock the moral sense even of an old Roman—a classic Roman—for a son-in-law to suffer his father to be arrested beneath his own roof. Besides, dear fellow, there are other considerations. You would hardly wish to have Pennycomequick's firm mixed up with Beaple Yeo, Esquire. It might, you know—you know—injure, compromise, and all that sort of thing—you understand——'

Philip turned to Mrs. Cusworth and asked her, 'Is it true, or—a lie?'

But the old lady was in no condition to answer. She opened her mouth and shut it, like a gasping fish, but no sound issued from her lips.

Then Salome recovered her composure and said, 'Philip! It is indeed true. He is my father. I am not, nor is Janet, her daughter. We are the twin children of her sister, who was married to—and then who was deserted by—this—this man Schofield. She took us, she and her dear good husband, and cared

for us as their own—we did not know that we were not her children—that we were her nieces—we were not told.’

‘Is this really true?’ asked Philip, again looking at Mrs. Cusworth, and his face clouded with the blood that suffused it, but so far beneath the skin that it did not colour, it only darkened it. ‘Is this true—or is it a lie told to persuade me to let this scoundrel escape? Either way it will lose its effect. I am just. I will give him over to suffer the consequences of his acts.’

Again Mrs. Cusworth tried to speak, but could not. She grasped at the mantelshelf; she could hardly stay herself from falling.

‘Very well,’ said Philip, looking fixedly at Schofield. ‘Let us suppose that it is true; that I have been trifled with, deceived, dishonoured. Very well. We will suppose it is so. Then let it come out. I will be no party to lying, dissimulation, to the screening of swindlers and scoundrels of any sort. My house is not a receiving house for stolen goods. I will return to the robbed that of which they have been despoiled. Hand me the bag.’

He spoke with a hard, metallic voice; scarce a trace of feeling was in it, save of the grate of animosity; his strong eye had no yielding in it, no light, only a sort of phosphorescent glimmer passing over it. He stooped, picked up the cane, and held it in his right hand, like a quarter-staff, and in his firm, knotted fist, cane though it was, it had the appearance of being a weapon capable of being used with deadly emphasis.

‘Now, then,’ said Philip, ‘put down that bag; there, on the chair near me. Instantly.’

Schofield looked into his face and did not venture to disobey. The iron resolution, the forceful, earnest, the remorseless determination there were not to be trifled with. Schofield put down the bag as desired.

‘The key.’

Sulkily, the fellow drew it from his trousers-pocket and flung it on the ground.

‘Pick it up.’

Schofield hesitated. He would not stoop. He dreaded a blow on the head; on the back of the head, which would fell him if he stooped, such a blow as he would himself deal the man before him if he

had a stick in his hand, and could induce him to bend at his feet.

As he hesitated, and a spark appeared in the eye of Philip, Salome stooped, rose, and handed the key to her husband.

He did not thank her. He did not look at her. He kept his eye steadily on Schofield — scarcely glancing at the bag as he opened it, and then only rapidly and cursorily at its contents—never for more than a second allowing it to be off his opponent, never allowing him to move a muscle unobserved, never to frame a thought unread. But, for all the speed with which he glanced at the contents of the bag, he saw that it contained a great deal of money. It was stuffed with bank-notes, and the figures on these notes were high. Philip leisurely reclosed and relocked the bag, put the key in his pocket and passed the strap over his own head.

Then only did a slight, almost cruel smile, stir the corners of his lips as he saw the blankness of Schofield and the break-up of his assurance.

‘Now, I suppose, I may go?’ said the rogue.

‘No,’ answered Philip, ‘I do nothing by half. I

have my old scores against Schofield as well as the new scores—which are not my own—against Beaple Yeo.’

‘But,’ said the man, in a shaking voice, ‘it will be so terribly bad for you to have the concern here mixed up with me—and you should consider that—the Bridlington scheme was a famous one, and was honest as the daylight. It must have rendered twenty-five per cent.—twenty-five as I am an honest man—and I should have become a millionaire. Then wouldn’t you have been proud of me, eh?—it was a good scheme and must have answered, only who was to dream that no land could be bought?’

He eyed Philip craftily, then looked at the door, then again at Philip—as soon expect to find yielding in him as to see honey distil out of flint. So he turned to Salome. ‘Speak a word for your father, child!’ he said in a low tone.

Salome shrank from him and turned to Philip, who put out his steady hand and thrust her back, not roughly but firmly, towards Schofield.

Then in a sudden frenzy of fear and anger the fellow screamed, ‘Will you let me pass?’

‘The constable will be here directly, and then I will ; not till then,’ said Philip.

‘Bah! the constable!’ scoffed Schofield. ‘You have sent to have a constable summoned. But where is he? Looking for a policeman is like searching for a text. You know he’s somewhere, but can’t for the life of you put your thumb on him. Look here, Philip,’ he lowered his voice to a sort of whine, ‘I’m awfully penitent for what I have done. Cut to the heart, gnawing of conscience, and all that sort of thing. It is a case of the prodigal father returning to the discreet and righteous son, and instead of running to meet me and help me, and giving me a good dinner—a good dinner, you know, and all that sort of thing, you threaten me with constables and conviction. I couldn’t do it myself. ’Pon my word I couldn’t. I suppose it is in us. I’m too much of a Christian—a true Christian, not a mere professor. I’m ashamed of you, Philip ; I’m sorry for you. I sincerely am. I’m terribly afraid for you that you are the Pharisee, despising me the humble, penitent Publican.’ The fellow was such a rascal that he could adapt himself to any complexion of man with whom

he was, and he tried on this miserable cant with Philip in the hope that it would succeed. But as he watched his face, and saw no sign of alteration of purpose in it, he changed his tone, and said sullenly, with a savagery in the sullenness : ‘ Come, let me go ; if I am brought to trial, I can tell you there will be pretty things come out, which neither you nor your wife will like to hear, and which will not suffer her to hold up her head very stiffly—eh ?’

He saw that he had made Philip wince.

At that moment the house door-bell rang, and he heard that the police-constable had arrived.

He turned, went to the fireplace, grasped the poker, and swinging it above his head rushed upon Philip. Salome uttered a cry. Mrs. Cusworth’s hand let go its grasp of the chimney-piece and she fell.

All happened in a moment—a blow of the poker on Philip’s arm—and Schofield was through the door and down the passage to the garden.

‘ Run after him, policeman, run !’ screamed Mrs. Sidebottom, as she admitted the constable.

But Schofield had gained the start, and when the policeman reached the door in the wall of the lower

garden he found it locked, and had to retrace his steps to the house. Time had been gained. No sooner was Schofield outside the garden than he relaxed his steps, and sauntered easily along the path till he reached the canal. He followed that till he arrived at a barge laden with coal, over the side of which leaned a woman, with a brown face, smoking a pipe.

‘ My lass !’ said Schofield, ‘ I’ve summat to tell thee—in private ;’ and he jumped on board and went down the ladder into the little cabin.

The woman, Ann Dewis, slowly drew her pipe out of her mouth and went after him to the hatch, looked in, and said, ‘ What be ’t, lad ? Eh, Earle ! Tha’rt come. Tak’ t’ pipe, I’ve kept it aleet a’ these years. Ah sed ah would, and ah’ve done it.’

CHAPTER XXXI.

ESTRANGEMENT.

ONE! Two! Three!

Hark! on the church bell: then, again—

One! Two! Three!

‘It is a woman or a little girl,’ said those listening.

Then again—

One! Two! Three!

‘A woman. Who can she be? Who is ill? But—how old?’ Then, again, the bell—

One! Two! Three!——up to forty-six.

‘Aged forty-six! Who can it be?’

Many faces appeared at the windows and doors of the street at Mergatroyd, and when the sexton emerged from the belfry, he was saluted with inquiries of, ‘Who is dead? Forty-six years old—who can she be?’

‘Mrs. Cusworth. Dropped dead with heart complaint.’

Now, in Yorkshire, when a man dies, then the bell tolls, Four, four, four ; when a boy, then Four, four, two ; when a woman dies, then as above, Thrice three ; and when a girl, Three, three, two ; after which, in each case, the age is tolled.

‘Fiddlesticks!—you may say what you will, it *is* fiddlesticks,’ said Mrs. Sidebottom impatiently. She was in the study with Philip. ‘I never heard of anything so monstrous, so inhuman. I could not have believed it of you. And yet—after what I have seen, I can believe anything of you.’

Philip was unmoved. ‘The plunder of that wretched fellow,’ he said unconcernedly, ‘shall be placed in proper hands. How much there is I cannot now say, and I do not know how many persons he has defrauded, and to what an extent. Whether all will get back everything is not certain ; probably they will receive a part, perhaps a large part, but not all.’

‘It is preposterous!’ burst in Mrs. Sidebottom, ‘I have been the means of catching him. No one would have had a farthing back but for my promptitude, my

energy, and my cleverness. Did not I track him here, and act as his gaoler, and drive him into a corner whilst you secured the money? And you say that I am to share losses equally with the rest! No such a thing. I shall have my money back in full; and the rest may make the best of what remains, and thank me for getting them that. As for what you say, Philip, I don't care who hears me, I say it is fiddlesticks—it is fiddlestick-ends.'

'I should have supposed, Aunt Louisa, that by this time you would have known that when I say a thing I mean it, and if I mean a thing I intend to carry it out unaltered.' Then after a pause: 'And now I am sorry to seem inhospitable, but under the painful circumstances—with death again in this house, and with my child ill, I am obliged to recommend you to return at once to York, and when there, not again to consult Mr. Smithies. It is more than probable that this reliable man of business of yours, whom you set to watch me, has sold you to that rascal Beaple Yeo—or whatever his name be.'

'Oh, gracious goodness!' exclaimed Mrs. Sidebottom. 'To be sure I will return to York. I

wouldn't for the world incommode you in a house of mourning. I know what it is ; the servants off such heads as they have, which are heads of hair and nothing else, and everything in confusion, and only tongues going. I wouldn't stay with you at this most trying time, Philip, not for worlds. I shall be off by the next train.'

Philip was left to himself.

His wife was either upstairs with the baby, or was below with the corpse of one whom she had looked up to and loved as a mother. Surely it was his place to go to her, draw her into the room where they could be by themselves, put his arm about her, and let her rest her head on his breast and weep, to the relief of her burdened heart.

But Philip made no movement to go to his wife.

She was alone, without a friend in the house. Her sister was away, her baby was ill. A death entails many things that have to be considered, arranged, and provided. Philip knew this. He sent word to the registrar of the death ; he did nothing more to assist Salome. He rang the bell, and when after a long time a servant replied to the summons, he gave orders

that clean sheets should be put on the bed lately occupied by Mrs. Sidebottom. He would, he said for awhile, sleep there.

Did it occur to Philip that there was cruelty in leaving his young wife alone at night, with a sick baby, and with the body of the woman, who had been to her as a mother, lying waiting for burial downstairs? Did it occur to him that she might feel infinite desolation at night, if he were away from her? He thought only of himself, of the wrong done to him.

‘She married me, and never told me who she was. She married me, lying under a false name.’

Salome had not realized, indeed, had not perceived, how deep and fatal a rift had been cloven in her relations with Philip. The fall of her mother, the efforts to restore life, the arrival of the doctor, the conviction struggled against but finally submitted to that life was extinct, had concentrated and engrossed all her faculties. Then, when she knew that death was again in the house, there sprang out of that knowledge many imperious duties that exacted of Salome full attention and much thought. Mrs. Sidebottom had volunteered no help. Upon Salome everything

depended. She had not the time to consider how Philip would take the startling revelation made to him. Salome was not one to give up herself to emotion. She braced herself to the discharge of the duties that devolved on her. Quiet, very pale, and hollow-eyed, she went about the house. From the nursery she found that the nurse had escaped, deserting the baby, that she might talk over the events that had occurred in the kitchen. The cook, Salome found, had made the pastry with washing instead of baking powder, and the housemaid had found too much to talk about to make the beds by four o'clock in the afternoon.

Only, when everything in the house had been seen to, a woman provided to attend to the dead, and all the trains off their lines set on them again, only then could Salome sit down and write to her sister of their common loss.

After this was done she wrote a few notes to friends, and then, lacking stamps, came with the packet to Philip's door.

He was seated at his secretaire writing, or pretending to write, with his brows bent, when he heard her

distinct and gentle tap at the door. He knew her tap, it was like that of no one else, and he called to her to enter.

‘My dear,’ she said, ‘I have not been able to come to you before. I have had so much to do; and—dear, I have wanted to speak to you; but, as you know, in such a case as this, personal wants must be set aside. Have you any stamps? I require a foreign one.’

He hardly looked up from the desk, but signed with the quill that she should shut the door. He was always somewhat imperious in his manner.

She shut the door, and came over to him, and laid the letters on his desk.

‘You will stamp them for me, dear?’ she said, and rested her hand lightly on his shoulder.

Then she saw how stern and set his face was, and a great terror came over her.

‘Oh, Philip!’ she said; and then, ‘I know what you are taking to heart, but there is no changing the past, Philip.’

Sometimes we have seen the reflection of the sun in rippled waters out of doors sent within on the

ceiling. How it dances; is here and there; now extinct, then once more it flashes out in full brilliancy. So was it with the colour in Salome's face; it started to one cheek, burnt there a moment, then went to the temples, then died away wholly, and in another moment was full in her face, the next to leave it ashy pale. Her voice also quivered along with the colour in her face, in rhythmic accord. Philip withdrew his shoulder from the pressure of her hand, and slowly stood up.

‘I shall be obliged if you will take a chair,’ said he formally, ‘as I desire an interview, but will undertake to curtail it as much as possible, as likely to be painful to both.’

She allowed her hand to fall back, and then drew away a step. She would not take a chair, as he had risen from his.

‘Philip,’ she said, ‘I am ready to hear all you have to say.’

She spoke with her usual self-possession. She knew that they must have an explanation about what had come out. There was always something in her voice that pleased; it was clear and soft, and

the words were spoken with distinctness. In nothing, neither in dress, in movement, nor in speech, was there any slovenliness in Salome. There was some perceptible yet indefinable quality in her voice which at once reached the heart.

Philip felt this, but put the feeling from him, as he had her hand.

‘Salome,’ said he, not looking at her, except momentarily, ‘a cruel trick has been played on me.’

‘Philip,’ said she quietly but pleadingly, ‘that man, as I told you, is my father, but I did not know it till yesterday. I had no idea but that I was the daughter of those who had brought me here, and who gave themselves out to be my parents. I will tell you what I know, but that is not much. He—I mean that man—had married my mother, who was the sister of her who is below, dead. He got into trouble somehow; I do not know what kind of trouble it was, but it was, I suppose, a disgraceful one, for he had to leave the country, and it was thought he would not venture back to England. My real mother, grieved at the shame, died and left us to her sister, who with her husband, Mr. Cusworth, cheerfully undertook the care of us,

adopted us as their own, and when they came here shortly after, gave out that we were their children, partly to save us the pain of knowing that our father had been a——well, what he was, partly also to screen us from his pursuit should he return, and also, no doubt, the more to attach us to themselves. As you know, shortly before Mr. Cusworth, our reputed father, was to be taken into partnership, a terrible accident happened and he was killed. Janet and I do not remember him. Since then mamma—I mean my aunt—and we children lived in this house with dear, kind, Uncle Jeremiah. Whether he knew the truth about us I have not been told. We never had any doubt that she whom we loved and respected as a mother was our real mother. Then, on the occasion of the terrible flood and the death of Uncle Jeremiah, or just after, he—I mean our father—reappeared suddenly, and without having let mamma know that he was yet alive. He came here in great destitution, wanted money, and even clothing. Mamma—you know whom I mean, really aunt—she was in great straits what to do. She did not venture openly to allow him to appear, and she suffered him to visit her

secretly through the lower garden-door, and to come to her sitting-room ; she gave him money and he went away. That was how her two hundred and fifty pounds went, about which you asked so many questions, and which she was afraid of your inquiring too much about. My father had then assumed the name of Beaple Yeo. She also allowed him to take uncle's great-coat and hat, which were laid out in the spare room for distribution. You told her to dispose of them as she saw fit.'

Philip hastily raised his hand.

Mrs. Sidebottom had hit the right nail on the head in her explanation of that mysterious visit to his house—and then he had scouted her explanation. He lowered his hand again, and Salome, who had supposed that he desired to speak, and had stopped, resumed what she was relating. 'Mamma heard nothing more of him after that till yesterday, when he reappeared. He was, he said, again in trouble, which meant, this time, that he must leave the country to avoid imprisonment. But he was not in a hurry to leave too hastily ; he would wait till the vigilance of the police was relaxed, nor would he go in the direc-

tion they expected him to take. He had come, he said, to ascertain Janet's address. He intended, he said, to go to her. My mother refused to give it. I trust she remained firm in her refusal, but of that I am not sure. He said that if I had not been married he would have carried me off with him ; it would not be so dull for him if he had a daughter as a companion. Janet knew about him and her relationship to him. I did not. When he came here first of all, Janet was in my mother's room, and the matter could not be concealed from her.'

'Do you mean seriously to tell me that till yesterday you were ignorant of all this?'

'Yes.'

'Ignorant when you married me that your name was Schofield, and not Cusworth?'

'Of course, Philip ; of course.' She spoke with a leap of surprise in her tone and in her eyes. It was a surprise to her that he should for a moment suppose it possible that she was capable of deceiving him, that he could think her other than truthful.

'Then at that first visit you were told nothing ; only Janet was let into the secret?'

‘Yes, dear Philip.’

‘What! the giddy, light-hearted Janet was made a confidante in a matter of such importance, and you the clear of intellect, prompt in action, close of counsel, were left in the dark? It is incredible.’

‘But it is true, Philip.’

Thereupon ensued silence.

She looked steadily at him with her frank eyes.

‘Surely, Philip, you do not doubt my word? Mamma only told Janet because the secret could not be kept from her. At that time my sister slept in mamma’s room, and spent the greater part of the day with her, so that it was not possible to keep from her the sudden arrival of—of him.’ She shuddered at the thought of the man who was her father. She put her hands over her face that burnt with an instantaneous blaze, but withdrew them again directly, to say vehemently, ‘But, Philip, surely it cannot be. You do not doubt me?’ She looked searchingly at him.

‘*Me!*’

He made no reply. His face was set. Not a muscle moved in it.

‘Philip!’ she said, with a catch of pain—a sudden

spasm in her heart and throat. ‘Philip, the sense of degradation that has come on me since I have known the truth has been almost more than I could bear. Not because of myself. What God sends me, that I shall find the strength to bear. I am nobody, and if I find that I am the child of someone worse than nobody—I must endure it. What crushes me is the sense of the shame I have brought on you, Philip, and the sorrow that a touch of dishonour should come to you through me. But I cannot help it. There is no way out of it. It has come on us without fault of ours, and we must bear it—bear it together. I’—she spread out her hands—‘I would lay down my life to save you from anything that might hurt you, that might grieve your proud and honourable spirit. But, Philip, I can do nothing. I cannot unmake the fact that I am his daughter and your wife.’

‘I shall never, never forgive that the truth was kept from me. The marriage was a fraud practised on me.’

‘My dear mother—you know whom I mean—acted with the kindest intentions, but I cannot excuse her for not speaking.’

‘Janet knew, as you tell me, and she said nothing.’

‘Mamma urged her to remain silent.’

‘I was sacrificed,’ said Philip bitterly. ‘Upon my word, this is a family that transmits from one generation to another the fine art of hoaxing the unsuspecting.’

‘Philip!’ A rush of indignant blood mantled her face, and then left it again. She heaved a sigh, and said, ‘If I had known before I married you whose daughter I was I would on no account have taken you. I would have taken no honest man for his own sake, no other for my own.’

‘You know what Schofield was to me—to me above every man. I can recall when I told you and Janet and your mother how he had embittered my life, how he had ruined my father—and you all kept silence.’

‘Philip, you are mistaken ; I never heard that.’

‘At all events your mother and Janet heard me—heard me when they knew I was engaged to you, and they told me nothing. It was infamous, unpardonable. They knew how I hated that man before I was married. They knew that I would rather have become allied to a Hottentot than to such an one as he. They let me marry you in ignorance—it was a fraud ; and

how, I ask'—he raised his voice in boiling anger—
'how can I trust *you* when you profess your ignorance?'
He sprang to his feet and walked across the room. 'I don't believe in your innocence. It was a base, a vile plot hatched between you all, Schofield and the rest of you. Here am I—just set on my feet and pushing my way in an honest business, and find myself bound by an indissoluble bond to the daughter of the biggest scoundrel on the face of the globe.'

Salome did not speak. To speak would be in vain.

He was furious ; he had lost his trust in her.

She began to tremble, as she had trembled when Mrs. Sidebottom had seen her on the stairs—a convulsive shivering extending from the shuddering heart outwards to the extremities, so that every hair on her head quivered, every fold in her gown.

'And now,' pursued Philip, 'the taint is transmitted to my child. It might have been endurable had I stood alone. It is intolerable now. These things run in the blood like maladies.'

She was nigh on fainting ; she lifted one hand slightly in protest ; but he was too angry to attend to any protest.

‘Can I doubt it? The clever swindler defrauded my father, and the clever daughter uses the inherited arts and swindles the son. How do I know but that the same falsehood, low, cunning, and base propensities may not lurk inherent in my child, to break out in time and make me curse the day that I gave to the world another edition of Beaple Yeo, alias Schofield, bearing my hitherto untarnished name?’

Then she turned and walked to the door, with her hands extended as one blind, stepping slowly, stiffly, as if fearful of stumbling over some unseen obstacle. She went out, and he, looking sullenly after her, saw of her only the white fingers holding the door, and drawing it ajar, and trying vainly to shut it, pinching them in so doing, showing how dazed she was—instinctively trying to shut the door, and too lost to what she was about to see how to do it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FLIGHT OF EROS.

THE funeral of Mrs. Cusworth was over.

The blinds were drawn up at last.

When the service at the grave was concluded, Philip and Salome returned to their home, if that may be called home from which the elements that go to make up home—trust, sympathy, pity, forgiveness—have fled.

The sun streamed in at the windows, broke in with a rude impatience, as the blinds mounted, and revelled on the floors again, and reflected itself in glass and gilding and china, brought out into bloom again the faded flowers on the carpets, and insisted on the bunches of roses and jessamine and nondescripts on the wall-papers putting on their colours and pretence of beauty.

But there was no sunshine streaming into the shadowed hearts of Philip and Salome, because over both the hand of Philip held down the blinds.

Philip, always cold, uncommunicative, allowing no one to lay finger on his pulse, resenting the slightest allusion to his life apart from business—Philip had made no friend in Mergatroyd, only acquaintances—drew closer about him the folds of reserve.

At one time much fuss was made about the spleen, but we have come now to disregard it, to hold it as something not to be reckoned with; and Philip regarded the heart as we do our spleens.

Philip was respected, but was not popular with his own class, and was respected, but not popular, among the operatives of his mill. Some men, however self-contained, are self-revealing in their efforts after concealment. So was it with Philip.

Shrewd public opinion in Mergatroyd had gauged and weighed him before he supposed that it was concerned about him. It pronounced him proud and honest, and capable, through integrity of purpose, of doing a cruel, even a mean, thing. He had been brought up apart from those modifying forces which

affect, or ought to affect, the conduct governed by principle. Principle is a good thing as a direction of the course of conduct, but principle must swerve occasionally to save it from becoming a destructive force. In the solar system every planet has its orbit, but every orbit has its deflections caused by the presence of fellow planets. Philip as a child had never lain with his head on a gentle bosom, from which, as from a battery, love had streamed, enveloping him, vivifying, warming the seeds of good in him. He reckoned with his fellow-men as with pieces of mechanism, to be used or thrown aside, as they served or failed. He had been treated in that way himself, and he had come to regard such a cold, systematic, material manner of dealing with his brother men as the law of social life.

That must have been a strange experience—the coming to life of the marble statue created by Pygmalion. How long did it take the veins in the alabaster to liquefy? How long before the stony breast heaved and pulsation came into the rigid heart? How long before light kindled in the blank eye, and how long before in that eye stood the testimony to perfect liquefaction, a tear?

There must have been in Galatea from the outset great deficiency in emotion, inflexibility of mind, absence of impulse ; a stony way of thinking of others, speaking of others, dealing with others ; an ever-present supposition that everyone else is, has been, or ought to be—stone.

Philip had only recently begun to mollify under the influence of Salome. But the change had not been radical. The softening had not extended far below the surface, had not reached the hard nerves of principle.

In the society of his wife, Philip had shown himself in a light in which no one else saw him. As the sun makes certain flowers expand, and these flowers close the instant the sun is withdrawn, so was it with him. He was cheerful, easy, natural with her, talked and laughed and showed her attentions ; but when he came forth into the outer world again he exhibited no signs of having unfurled.

Now that his confidence in his wife was shaken, Philip was close, undemonstrative, in her presence as in that of his fellows. He was not the man to make allowances, to weigh degrees of fault. Allowances had not been made for his shortcomings in his past

life, and why should he deal with Salome as he had not been dealt by? Fault is fault, whether in the grain or in the ounce.

When Philip said the prayer of prayers at family devotions, and came to the petition, 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us,' he had no qualms of conscience, not a suspicion that his conduct was ungenerous.

He forgave Salome—most certainly he forgave her. He bore no malice against her for having deceived him. He was ready to make her an allowance of forty pounds per annum for her clothing, and thirty pounds for pocket or pin money. Should she fall ill, he would call in a specialist regardless of expense; if she wanted to refurnish the drawing-room he would not grudge the cost. Would a man be ready to do all this unless he forgave a trespass against him? He could not take her head, and lay it on his shoulder, and stroke the golden hair, and kiss the tears from her eyes—but then he did not ask of Heaven to pet and mollicoddle him, only to forgive him, and he did forgive Salome.

He saw that his wife's heart ached for her mother;

that she felt keenly the loss of her who had been to her the representative of all maternal tenderness and consideration. That was natural and inevitable. But everyone has to undergo some such partings ; it is the lot of humanity, and Salome must accommodate herself to her bereavement. He saw that she was without an intimate friend in the place, to whom she could pour out her heart, and of whom take counsel ; but then, he also had been friendless, till he came not to require a friend and to value human sympathy. What he did not appreciate, she must learn to do without.

He saw that she was distressed and in agony of mind because he was offended with her ; but this afforded him no regret. She had sinned against him and must accept the consequences. It was a law of nature that sin should meet with punishment, and the sinner must accept his chastisement as his due. What were the consequences in comparison with the weight of her transgression ?

Procrustes had a bed on which he tied travellers, and if their length exceeded that of the bed he cut off their extremities ; but if they were shorter, he had them stretched to equal it. Philip had his iron bed

of principle, on which he extended himself, and to this he would fit his poor, tender, suffering wife.

As he and Salome returned together from the funeral they hardly spoke to each other on the way. Her hand was on his arm, trembling with grief and mute, disregarded appeal. He knew that she was crying, because she continually put her kerchief to her eyes. Tears are a matter of course at funerals, as orange-blossoms are a concomitant of weddings. Mrs. Cusworth, though not Salome's mother, had stood to her for eighteen years in the relation of one ; tears, therefore, thought Philip, were proper on this occasion—very proper.

He did not blame her for crying—God forbid !

For his own part, Philip had regarded Mrs. Cusworth with dislike ; he had seen how commonplace, unintellectual a woman she was ; but it was of course right, quite right and proper, that Salome should see the good side of the deceased.

Philip wore his stereotyped business face at the funeral, the face he wore when going through his accounts, hearing a sermon, reprimanding a clerk, paying his rates. He was somewhat paler than usual,

but the most attentive observer could not say that this was caused by feeling and was not the effect of contrast to his new suit of glossy black mourning. Not once did he draw the little hand on his arm close to his side and press it. He let it rest there with as much indifference as if it were his paletôt.

On reaching the house, he opened the door with his latchkey, and stood aside to allow Salome to enter. Then he followed, hung his hat on the stand, and blew his nose. He had avoided blowing his nose at the grave or in the street, lest it should give occasion to his being supposed to affect a grief he did not feel ; and Philip was too honest to pretend what was unreal, and afraid to be thought to pretend.

He followed Salome upstairs.

On reaching the landing where was his study door, Salome turned to look at him before ascending further. Her face was white, her eyes red with weeping. Wondrously beautiful in colour and reflected light was her ruddy gold hair bursting out from under the crape bonnet above her pallid face.

She said nothing, but waited expectantly, with her brown eyes on his face. He received the look with

imperturbable self-restraint, opened his door, and without a word went into his study.

Salome's bosom heaved, a great sob broke from it ; and then she hastily continued her ascent. She had made her final appeal, and it had been rejected.

Mrs. Cusworth had died worth an inconsiderable sum, and that she had left to Janet, as more likely to need it than Salome.

And now that the last rites had been paid to the kindhearted, if stupid and illiterate old woman, who had loved Salome as her own child, Salome turned to her baby to pour forth upon it, undivided, the rich torrent of her love, gushing tinged with blood from a wounded heart.

There exists a sympathetic tie in nature and in human relations of which Philip had never thought—that between the mother and the babe. And now the wrong done to the mother reacted, revenged itself on her child. The little one had been ailing for awhile, now it became seriously ill. The strain to which Salome had been put made itself felt in the weak frame of the infant that clung to her breast. Salome would allow no one to nurse her darling but herself

whilst its precious life was in danger, and the child would, on its part, allow no one else to touch it. It sobbed and cried and demanded of its mother infinite patience and pity, unwearied rocking in her arms and hugging to her heart, a thousand kisses, and many tears, words of infinite love and soothing addressed to it, soft sighs breathed over it from an utterly weary bosom, and earnest prayers, voiceless often, but ever ascending, as the steam of the earth to heaven.

For awhile, care for the babe excluded all other thoughts, devoured all other cares. Through the long still night Salome was by her child ; she did not go to bed, she sat in the room by its crib, sometimes taking it on her lap, in her arms, then, when it was composed to sleep, laying it again in its cradle. She heard every stroke of the clock at every hour. She could not sleep, she could but watch and pray.

Every hour or two Philip came to inquire after his child. He stood by the cradle when it was sleeping there, stooped and looked at the flushed face and the little clenched hands ; but when it was on Salome's lap or in her arms he did not come so near, he stood apart, and instead of examining the child himself,

asked about it. Salome controlled herself from giving way to feeling ; her composure, the confidence with which she acted, impressed Philip with the idea that she had got over all other troubles except that caused by the child's illness ; and were this to pass that she would be herself again.

But, through all her thought for the child ran the burning, torturing recollection of what Philip had said concerning it. She was not sure that he desired that it should live—live to grow up a Beaple Yeo—a Schofield. The house was perfectly still. All the servants were asleep. Only Salome was awake upstairs, when at four o'clock in the morning, as the day was beginning to break raw and gray in the east, and to look wanly in through the blind into the sick room—Philip entered.

Salome was kneeling by the crib—a swing crib of wood on two pillars. She knelt by it, she had been rocking, rocking, rocking, till she could no more stir an arm. Aching in all her joints, with her pulses hammering in her weary brain, she had laid both hands on the crib side, and her brow against it also. Was she asleep, or was she only fagged out and had

slidden into momentary unconsciousness through exhaustion of power? Her beautiful copper hair, burnished in every hair, reflected the light of the lamp on the dressing-table. On one delicate white finger was the golden hoop. She did not hear Philip as he entered. Hitherto, whenever he had come through the door, she had looked up at him wistfully. Now only she did not, she remained by the crib, holding to it, leaning her brow on it, and tilting it somewhat on one side.

He stood by her, and looked down on her, and for awhile a softness came over his heart, a stirring in its dead chambers as of returning life. He saw how worn out she was. He saw that she who had been so hearty, so strong, in a few days had become thin and frail in appearance, that the fresh colour had gone from her cheek, the brightness from her eye, that the sweet dimple had left her mouth. He saw her love and self-devotion for her child, the completeness with which her soul was bound up in it. And he saw how lonely she now was without her mother to talk to about the maladies, the acquirements, and the beauty of her darling.

She did not glance up at that moment, or she would have seen tokens of melting in his cold eye.

He remained standing by her, and he looked at the child now sleeping quietly. It was better, he trusted. It could hardly be so still unless it was better.

Then, all at once, Salome recovered consciousness, saw him, and said, 'Oh, Philip, you do not want him to die?'

Philip drew himself up.

'You have the crib too much tilted,' he said. He put his hands to it to counterbalance her weight, but she raised her head from the side and the crib righted itself. He still kept his hand where he had placed it, without any reason for so doing.

'Philip,' she said again, with passionate entreaty in her voice, 'you do not wish my darling to die?'

'How can you ask such a foolish question!' he answered. 'I am afraid the long night-watching has been too much for you.'

'Oh, Philip—you do love him? You do love him—although there is something of me in him. But——' she said hastily, 'he is mostly yours. He is like you,

he has dark hair and eyes, and his name is Philip, and of course he *is*, he is a Pennycomequick ! Oh, Philip ! You love him dearly ?’

‘Of course I love him ; he is my child. Why do you doubt ?’

‘Because,’ she said, ‘I—I am his mother. But that is all—I am only a sort of superior nurse. He is a Pennycomequick through and through, and there is no—no—nothing of what you dread in him.’

‘Yes, he is a Pennycomequick.’

‘He can, he will be no other than a good and noble man. He can, he will be that, if God spares him.’

‘So I trust.’

‘Oh, Philip—he is better, so much better. I am sure there is a turn. I thank God—indeed, indeed I do. Look at his dear little face ; it is cool again.’

He had his hand on the side of the crib, and he stooped to look at the sleeping babe. And, as he was so doing, Salome, who still knelt, put her lips timidly to his hand and kissed it—kissed it as it rested on the side of her babe’s crib.

Then he withdrew his hand. He took his kerchief

out of his pocket, wiped it, said coldly, ' Yes, the child is better,' and left the room.

Philip went to bed. He had not asked Salome if she were going to rest, he had not called up the nurse to relieve her, though he saw and admitted that she was worn out. He had withdrawn his hand from her lips not with intention to hurt her, but to show her that he was opposed to sentimentality, and not inclined to be cajoled into a renewal of confidence by such arts. That which angered and embittered him chiefly was the fact that he was tied to a woman of such disreputable parentage. Then, in the next place, he could not forgive the fraud practised on him in making him marry her in ignorance of her real origin. He did not investigate the question whether Salome were privy to it. He thought that it was hardly possible she could have been kept in complete ignorance of the truth. It was known to her sister. Some suspicion of it at least must have been entertained by her. A fraud, a scandalous one, had been perpetrated—on her own showing by her sister and reputed mother—and even supposing she were not guilty of taking share in it, she must reap the conse-

quences of the acts of her nearest relatives. Mrs. Cusworth and Mrs. Baynes were beyond the reach of his anger, therefore it must fall on the one accessible.

Salome had acquired by marriage with him a good position and a comfortable home, and it was conceivable that for the sake of these prospective advantages she would have acquiesced, if not actually concurring, in the wretched mean plot which had led to his connection with her—the daughter of the most despicable of men, and his own personal enemy.

Philip went to bed and fell asleep, satisfied with himself that he had acted aright, and that suffering was necessary to Salome to make her feel the baseness of her conduct.

Salome finding that the child fretted, took it out of the cot, drew it to her bosom, and seated herself by the window. She had raised the blind and looked out at the silvery morning light breaking in the east, and the pale east was not more wan than her own face. When Psyche let fall the drop of burning wax on the shoulder of Cupid, the god of Love leaped up, spread his wings and fled. Psyche stood at the window watching his receding form, not knowing

whither he went, but knowing that he went from her without prospect of return. So now did Salome look from the window gazing forth into the cold sky, looking after lost love—gone—gone, apparently, past recall.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

EXILE.

DAYS passed, and the house had settled into formal ways. The meals were at the usual hours, to the minute. Philip went to the office at the usual time, and at the usual time returned from it; everything had again entered into its routine as before. But the relations between husband and wife were not improved. They met at meals, rarely else. At table a conventional conversation was maintained. Philip occupied his bachelor apartments, and expressed no intention of leaving them. Beyond the formal inquiries after Salome's health in the morning, he took no interest in her condition of mind and body. He did not perceive that she still suffered, was becoming thin, pale, and worn. He could not have invented a more cruel torture than this daily life of chill inter-

course between them, and Salome felt that it was becoming insupportable. She attended to the household duties. She looked after his comforts, saw that his room was properly dusted, that his papers, his books were always in the same place, that his clothing was in order, that strict punctuality was observed in all that concerned him—he accepted this as of course, and was unaware that every element that conduced to his well-being was not present naturally. He did not know that his wife entered his room when he was away and rectified the little neglects and transpositions of the housemaid; he did not know how much time, and how many tears were given to his shirts and his socks and collars. He was unaware of the patient consideration devoted to the dinner, to ensure that he should have an appetizing meal after his work in the office during the day. He did not entertain the suspicion that the regularity of the house was only effected by constant urgency and supervision.

That there was a change in the relations of Philip and his wife did not strike the outer world, which had not been invited by him previously to consider the

nature and closeness of those relations. In the presence of others Philip was courteous and formal towards his wife now, but he had been courteous and formal towards her in public before. He had not called upon the neighbours and acquaintances to rejoice with him because he had found domestic happiness ; he did not invite them now to lament with him because he had discovered it to be chimerical.

He refused to Salome none of those attentions which are required by common politeness ; what she missed were those which spring out of real affection. His behaviour to her in public was unchanged, and he carried this manner into his private interviews with her. Such interviews were now brief and business-like. He no longer spoke to her about what was past, he never referred to her father. He never allowed her to entertain the smallest hope that his behaviour would change.

Philip rarely spoke to a servant, never except on business; and he was surprised one day when the nurse ventured to intrude on his privacy and ask leave to say something to him.

Philip gave the required permission ungraciously.

Then the woman said :

‘ Please, sir, the missus be that onconsiderate about hersen that she’d never think o’ telling nobody about nowt that was wrong with her. And so, I dare say, you don’t know, sir, that it is not all well wi’ her. Shoo has sudden faintive’s, and they come on ow’er often. Shoo makes light o’t, but don’t better of it. I sed to her, shoo ought to tell you, but shoo wouldn’t. And, please sir, shoo’s a good missus, and too precious to be let slip through the fingers for not looking after what’s amiss i’ time. So—sir—I’ve made bould to say a word about it.’

Philip was surprised, even shocked.

‘ I will see to it,’ he said ; and then, ‘ That will do.’

He took occasion to speak with Salome about her health, and now his eyes were opened to see how delicate she had become. She admitted her fainting-fits, but made light of them.

‘ I have been overtaxed, that is all, Philip. I shall soon be quite myself again.’

‘ You have had a good deal of anxiety, no doubt, and that may account for it. Still—it would be

a satisfaction to have an opinion. Do you care for Mr. Knight?’

‘Oh no, Philip—he is very clever, but too young. I should not like to have Mr. Knight here about me. But I assure you, it is nothing!—I mean there is nothing really the matter with me. It used to be said that I had all the *physique* of us two sisters, and Janet all the *verve*.’

‘I wish you to have proper advice. You understand. I wish it.’

‘Then, Philip, I will let anyone you like come and see me, or I will go to anyone you recommend.’

‘I have no knowledge of doctors,’ he said almost contemptuously.

‘If I might have a choice——’ she hesitated.

‘Of course you may—in reason.’

‘There is Mr. John Dale; he was dear Uncle Jeremiah’s best friend, and he is Janet’s guardian. I always liked him, and he knows about us sisters. Besides, I do want to see him and ask him what he thinks about Janet; but he is a long way off, he is at Bridlington. If you think it would be extravagant sending so far, I would go myself gladly.

and see him. Indeed, I dare say the journey would do me good.'

'Very well,' said Philip, 'I'll telegraph for Mr. Dale.'

'And then,' added Salome, 'if you do not object, he can overhaul baby and see that the darling is sound as a bell. But—there is no need at all to telegraph. I know quite well what is the matter with me. It is nothing that any doctor can cure.'

'What is it?'

'I have had a good deal to worry me, to make me unhappy. I cannot sleep, I am always thinking. I can see no way out of the trouble. If there were the tiniest thread to which I could lay hold, then I should soon be well—but there is none. It reminds me of what I have read about the belief the North American Indians have concerning their origin. They were, they say, once in a vast black abyss in the centre of the earth, and there were tiny fibres hanging from the roof, and some of them laid hold of these fibres, and crawled up them, and following them came to the surface of earth and saw the sun, but others never touched a depending thread, and they wander on in

timeless darkness, without a prospect, and without cognizance of life.'

'Well——'

'And I am like these, only with this pang, that I have been in the light. No—there is no fibre hanging down for me.'

She spoke timidly, and in a tone of half inquiry.

He did not answer.

'Philip, you must believe my word when I say that I never knew till the night before you heard it, that I was not what it had been given out I was.'

'We will not debate that matter again,' said Philip sharply. 'It can lead to nothing.'

'There is, then, no fibre,' she said sadly, and withdrew.

John Dale arrived, bluff, good-natured, boisterous.

'Hallo! what is the matter with you?' was his first salutation; and when he had heard what her ailments of body were—she made light of them to him—he shook his head and said bluntly, 'That's not all—it is mental. Now, then, what is it all about?'

'Mamma was taken suddenly ill and died; it was a dreadful shock to me. Then baby was unwell, and I

had to watch him night and day ; he would let no one else be with him.'

'But the expression of your face is changed, and neither your mother nor baby has done that. You are in some trouble. A doctor is a confessor. Come, what is up ?'

Then she told him—not all, but a good deal. She told him who she was, and how she had discovered her origin—that her father was the man who had started the swindle about Iodinopolis, but that Beaple Yeo was not his real name ; he had assumed that in place of his true name, Schofield.

'What—the scoundrel who did for Nicholas Pennycomequick ?'

Salome bowed her head.

'I see it all,' said Dale. 'I never met that fellow Schofield, but I knew Nicholas Pennycomequick, and I know how he was ruined. I had no idea that the fellow Yeo, whom I met at Bridlington, was the same. Now, my dear child, I understand more than you have told me. I shall not give you any medicine, but order you away from Mergatroyd.'

'I cannot—I cannot leave baby.'

‘Then take baby with you.’

Salome shook her head.

She also saw that nothing would do her good save an escape from the crushing daily oppression of Philip’s coldness and stiff courtesy.

A day or two later she received a letter with a foreign postmark, and she tore it open eagerly, for she recognised her sister’s handwriting.

The letter was short. Janet complained of not getting any better ; her strength was deserting her. And she added : ‘Oh, Salome, come to me, come to me if you can, and at once. He is here.’

There was no explanation as to who was implied, but Salome understood. Her sister was ill, weak, and was pestered by the presence of that man—that horrible man who was their father.

She went to Philip’s door and tapped. She was at once admitted.

‘Philip,’ she said, ‘I refused to take Mr. Dale’s advice on Tuesday, I will take it now if you will allow me. I have heard from Janet. She is ill.’ The tears came into her eyes. ‘She is very ill, and entreats me to fly to her without delay.’

She said nothing to him of who she had heard was with her sister.

‘I am quite willing that you should go,’ he said.

The words were hard. The lack of feeling in them touched her to the quick.

‘Very well, Philip,’ she said ; ‘with your consent I will go. Baby must do without me for awhile, unless,’ she brightened, ‘unless you will allow me to take baby and nurse with me.’

‘No,’ answered Philip, ‘on no account. Go yourself, but I cannot entertain that other proposal.’

She sighed.

‘Where is Janet?’ he asked.

‘At Andermatt—on the St. Gothard. The air is bracing there.’

‘Very well. You will want money. You shall have it.’

‘And how long may I stay?’

‘That entirely remains with yourself. As far as I am concerned, I am indifferent.’

So Salome was to go. She was now filled with a feverish impatience to be off—not that she cared for herself, that the change might do her good—but

because the leaving home would be to her agony, and she was desirous to have the pang over.

She felt that she could not endure to live as she had of late, under the same roof with her husband and yet separated from him, loving him with her faithful, sincere heart, and meeting with rebuff only ; guiltless, yet regarded as guilty, her self-justification disregarded, her word treated as unworthy of credence. No—she could not endure the daily mortification, and she knew that it would be well for her to leave ; but for all that she knew that the leaving home would be to her the acutest torture she could suffer. She must leave her dear child, uncertain when she would see it again. She did not hide from herself that if she left, she left not to return till some change had taken place in Philip's feelings towards her. She could not return to undergo the same freezing process. But she raised no hopes on what she knew of Philip's character. As far as she was acquainted with it—it was unbending. Salome had that simple faith which leads one to take a step that seems plain, without too close a questioning as to ultimate consequences. She had been told by the doctor whom she trusted that

she must go away from Mergatroyd, and immediately came the call of her sister. To her mind, this was a divine indication as to the course she must take, and she prepared accordingly to take it.

At the best of times it is not without misgiving and heartache that we leave home, if only for a holiday, and only for a few weeks ; we discover fresh beauties in home, new attractions, things that require our presence, and obstruct our departing steps. A certain vague fear always rises up, lest we should never return, at least, that when we return something should be changed that we value, something going wrong that we have left right, some one face be missing that we hold to with infinite love. It is a qualm bred of the knowledge of the uncertainty of all things in this most shifting world, a qualm that always makes itself felt on the eve of departure. With Salome this was more than a qualm ; she was going, she knew not to what ; she was going, she knew not for how long ; and the future drew a gray impenetrable veil before her eyes—she could not tell, should she return, to what that return would be. She did not reckon about her child. She could not, she would not be sepa-

rated from it—but whether Philip would let the child go to her, or insist on her return to the child, that she did not ask. The future must decide. Whatever she saw to be her duty, that she would do. That was Salome's motive principle. She would do her duty anywhere, at any sacrifice ; when she saw what her duty was.

A cab was procured from the nearest town, four miles distant, to take Salome to the station.

Oh the last clasp of her babe ! The tearful eyes, the quivering mouth, the beating heart, the inner anguish ; and then—as she ran downstairs, with her veil drawn over her face, Philip encountered her on the landing, and offered her—not his cheek, not his heart—but his arm to take her to the cab.

END OF VOL. II.



